

BRAND IMAGE OF MBA BUSINESS
SCHOOLS IN SOUTH AFRICA AS
DRIVER OF CUSTOMER-BASED
BRAND EQUITY

W. F. COOP

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**Brand Image of MBA Business Schools in South Africa as Driver of
Customer-Based Brand Equity**

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Abstract

Brand image has long been recognised by marketers and brand researchers alike as an important concept in marketing. Brand image as defined by Keller (1993), is complex and consists of perceptions about a brand as reflected in memory by the brand associations held in consumer memory. These brand associations are the other informational nodes linked to the brand in memory and contain the meaning of the brand for consumers. Brand image in turn will impact on customer-based brand equity which Keller (1993) defines as the differential effect that overall brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing effort of a brand.

This study investigates the importance and relevance of brand image and its impact on customer-based brand equity in a high-involvement purchase, using the MBA market as the field of study.

Based on the findings of the research conducted by Markinor (2001) regarding the perceptions of business schools by MBA graduates in South Africa, the writer developed an Integrated Brand Management Model which will serve as a conceptual framework for managing the “brand gap”, defined as the gap that exists between brand identity (as proposed by the organisation), and brand image (as perceived by the consumer). Furthermore, the model illustrates the dimensions of brand identity that need to be managed on an ongoing basis by brand managers to ensure the success of a brand, and the resultant impact that this management process will have on the various dimensions of brand equity.

Declaration

I, William Francis Coop, declare that this dissertation is my own work and that all sources have been accurately reported and acknowledged.

W.F.Coop

January, 2002

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The 1980s marked a turning point in the conception of brands as management began to realise that the principal asset of a company was in fact its brand names. This realisation gave rise to the concept of brand equity which has been defined by Aaker as “a set of assets (and liabilities) linked to a brand’s name and symbol that adds value to (or subtracts from) the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm’s customers” (Aaker, 1996:7).

According to the *Encyclopaedia of Brands and Branding*, real brand value lies in consumer loyalty, which is becoming increasingly dependent upon the skilful application of marketing communication tools to develop and promote the brand personality. This in turn gives the brand visibility, keeps it relevant to the times and strengthens the relationship with the consumer (*Encyclopaedia of Brands and Branding in South Africa*, 1999).

An extension of Aaker’s definition was provided by Kevin Lane Keller, in a landmark *Journal of Marketing* paper in January 1993, and in a subsequent book entitled *Strategic Brand Management*, in 1998. Keller presented a conceptual model of brand equity from the perspective of the individual consumer. He defined customer-based brand equity as “the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand” (Keller, 1993:91). Brand knowledge, according to Keller, is conceptualised

according to an associative network memory model in terms of two components, brand awareness and brand image (i.e., a set of brand associations) (Keller, 1993).

Customer-based brand equity occurs when the consumer is familiar with the brand, and holds some favourable, strong, and unique brand associations in memory (Keller, 1993). Brand image may be defined as the set of beliefs about a brand, and the consumer's brand image will vary with experiences as filtered by the effects of selective perception, selective distortion, and selective retention. Consumers arrive at attitudes (judgements, preferences) towards the various brands through an attitude evaluation procedure (Keller, 1993). Biel has stated that while brand equity has come to stand for a financial concept associated with the valuation placed on a brand, it is useful to recognise that the equity of a brand is driven by brand image, a consumer (or customer) concept (Biel, 1992:7).

According to Biel, any expectation of the cash flow premium enjoyed by a successful brand, ultimately depends upon consumer behaviour. Consumer behaviour is, according to Biel, at root, driven by perceptions of a brand. While behavioural measures of purchase describe the existence of equity, they fail to reveal what is in the hearts and minds of consumers that is actually driving equity (Biel, 1992:7).

Biel states further, that in the past, research on branding has largely focused on the identification of brand image and also on the monitoring of image change. Studies of this type were largely descriptive in nature. Today the key issues in branding research, from a practitioner's point of view, focus on two themes: one is how to quantify brand equity;

the other is how to identify the elements of brand image likely to impact changes in consumer behaviour and in turn lead to changes in brand equity (Biel, 1992:10). Although this article is somewhat dated, the principle of brand image as highlighted by Biel (1992), and its relationship to, and impact upon brand equity, is still relevant to marketers of branded products even today.

The marketing literature studied by the writer over a long period of time, both from an academic and practitioner perspective, led to the decision to undertake this further study of brand image and its relevance and importance in the development of brand equity. The main reasons for undertaking the study stem from the writer's personal interest in the field of marketing strategy and consumer behaviour, and in particular the power of perception and the influence of consumer perception relative to brands.

The success or failure of a brand is often based on consumer perception of the attributes of the brand and the perceived benefits that can be derived from using the brand. Marketers can determine through marketing research what consumers consider to be the ideal attributes of the product category, or what consumers perceive their needs to be in relation to the product category (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1991:162). This consumer perception of the brand and its subsequent brand equity is defined in terms of the marketing effects uniquely attributable to the brand (Keller, 1993).

Keller states further that brand image is defined as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory, and that these brand associations

contain the meaning of the brand for consumers (Keller, 1993). In contrast to the concept of brand image, a brand identity is how the brand would like to be perceived, and is the focus of efforts by brand managers and brand strategists (Aaker, 1996).

It is important for brand managers and brand strategists to ensure that consumer perceptions regarding the brand identity as determined by the company, on the one hand, are aligned to the subsequent brand image, as determined by the consumer. Brand image, according to Keller, is affected by brand associations, and the favourability, strength, and uniqueness of these brand associations are the dimensions distinguishing brand knowledge that play an important role in determining the differential response that makes up brand equity, especially in high-involvement decision settings (Keller, 1993).

1.2 Main Research Problem

The selection of an MBA programme is a high-involvement process, which typically involves a long lead time between the initial start of the selection process to actual final selection of the institution presenting the programme. High-involvement purchases are those that are very important to the consumer in terms of perceived risk, and prompt the consumer to engage in extensive problem solving (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1991:213). Numerous factors are likely to influence the final selection, not least of which is the brand image of the institution presenting the programme. In selecting an MBA programme, factors such as the reputation of the institution, the quality of the curriculum,

quality of lecturers, amongst others are likely to have a direct influence on the selection process.

The rapid increase in MBA service providers internationally, coupled with the advances in technological delivery of MBA programmes, has compounded the problems in terms of marketing by the institutions, and selection by the consumer. This increase is reflected in the fact that 1018 MBA institutions were listed in the USA as at September, 2000 (www.unicorn.us.com/guide). The South African MBA market is no exception, and there are currently more than 40 MBA service providers that have been granted conditional accreditation by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

Many brands fail owing to their negative image as perceived by consumers. According to Keller's Dimensions of Brand Knowledge Model (Keller, 1993), brand knowledge is a combination of two basic factors:

- Brand awareness.
- Brand image.

Brand awareness is a factor of brand recall and brand recognition. Brand image, according to Keller, is defined as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory (Keller, 1993). The favourability, strength, and uniqueness of brand associations are the dimensions distinguishing brand knowledge that play an important role in determining the differential response that makes up brand equity, especially in high-involvement decision settings (Keller, 1993).

The main research problem is therefore to identify which types of brand associations, and in particular, which attributes and perceived benefits of an MBA brand, are most likely to influence the selection of an MBA service provider by a prospective MBA student. This implies that there may be certain attributes and perceived benefits that may be more important than others for a prospective student when selecting an MBA service provider.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

- The basic premise for the formulation of the hypothesis is that the perception of a favourable and positive brand image will result in improved customer-based brand equity.

The detailed hypothesis formulation in respect of this study will be covered in Chapter 3. The perception of any brand and the resultant brand image formed of the brand by the consumer, will be influenced by various brand associations experienced by the consumer and the brand. Brand associations may take many different forms and levels of abstraction, and are classified into three major categories according to Keller (1993). These categories are:

- Perceived and actual attributes of the brand.
- Perceived benefits of the brand in relation to other competing brands.
- The attitudes of consumers towards the brand.

These brand associations will be elaborated on in Chapter 2 during the literature review.

1.4 Delimitation of the Research Study

The study will be limited to MBA students who have graduated, or who have completed all the requirements for graduation, during 1999 and 2000 in South Africa.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study will be to determine the relevance and importance of brand image as a driver towards building positive customer-based brand equity. Furthermore, the study will attempt to identify which types of brand associations and attributes of brand image that are most likely to impact changes in consumer behaviour by prospective students when selecting an MBA service provider.

1.6 Significance of the Research

The image of a brand may be defined as that cluster of attributes and associations that consumers connect to the brand name (Keller, 1993:4). These evoked associations can result in the formation of perceptions (both positive and negative) regarding the brand. The resultant image formed will impact directly on the consumer and influence the consumer's choice in terms of brands. Lannon noted that brands are bought for who they are as well as what they are (Lannon, 1991).

Research has suggested that brands can evoke feelings as well as associations. Blackston (1991) has done some important work in the area of brand-consumer interaction. He has demonstrated the existence of brand relationships by showing that consumers are not only able to describe the way they see brands, but also the way in which brands see their consumers.

Brand images also have a strong nonverbal component and King (1989) has suggested that the use of a well-chosen “visual metaphor” can capture, through association, desirable values to be associated with a brand. Visual representations are processed differently, and not subject to the same logical scrutiny for verbal propositions (Biel, 1992).

The significance of this research lies in the fact that a deeper understanding of the elements of brand image, which include the types and relevance of brand associations during the decision-making process, can lead to an improvement in customer-based brand equity.

1.7 Outcomes and Contribution of the Research

The author is of the opinion that an improved knowledge and understanding of brand image and the impact that such image generates can have a significant impact upon consumer perceptions and consumer decision-making of a specific product or service. This improved knowledge and understanding of brand image can, in turn, lead to more effective marketing on the part of MBA service providers.

The outcomes of this research will endeavour to contribute to the established facts in this field of study. The study will further attempt to build upon previous research and develop a model, which will serve as a framework in relating brand image to customer-based brand equity. The model will build on from the previous conceptual framework developed by Keller in his Dimensions of Brand Knowledge Model (1993), and will identify the importance of the link between brand identity and brand image, and the impact that this link can have in building customer-based brand equity.

1.8 Research Design

The research design selected embraces previous research conducted in the field of brand image and other related components such as brand identity, brand salience, brand awareness, brand recall and brand recognition, amongst others. The research design will compare this previous research cited above with a survey of MBA graduates recently completed by the research company Markinor in August 2001.

The study undertaken consisted of a survey of a sample of MBA graduates during 1999 and 2000. The reason for the selection of this type of design, is that it is directly related and appropriate to the problem statement, and furthermore addresses the issues relating to the importance of brand image when selecting an MBA service provider.

The aim of the research will be to analyse and interpret data obtained during this survey as it relates to the hypothesis.

1.9 Research Methodology

The writer obtained permission to work in conjunction with Markinor, who were commissioned by the *Financial Mail* to produce a market research report entitled "Ranking the MBAs 2001". This report is produced annually for the *Financial Mail* by Markinor, and the writer obtained permission from Markinor to utilise part of the research from this report and use it as the basis for his dissertation.

1.10 Conclusion

The outline and structure of the dissertation which follows will include the following:

- Chapter 2: The Literature Review which contains the demarcation of the literature covered, the definition of key concepts, rationale for inclusion and link to the problem statement, hypothesis and sub-problems.

- Chapter 3: Defines the research hypothesis and the key concepts and variables that form part of the research study. This chapter also documents the research design and methodology followed during the fieldwork, and discusses the instruments used in the measurement of the key variables of the study. The sample design, the sampling techniques employed and the criteria used in the choice of sample size are also explained. Data analysis procedures are described, along with a description of the quality of data collected, together with shortcomings, limitations and gaps in the data.
- Chapter 4: Documents the results of the fieldwork, including a discussion of the sample and its characteristics, the main trends and patterns in the data with reference to the hypothesis and sub-problems, and a final interpretation of the main findings.
- Chapter 5: Discusses the main findings obtained from the study and the relevant link between the results and the literature reviewed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The point of departure for this chapter is the demarcation of the literature covered during the study, and the relationship of this literature to the research problem. The literature review is organised around several key constructs derived as a result of the formulation of the research problem. The aim of the literature review is to obtain a clear definition of these key constructs and demonstrate their interrelationship, relevance and importance to the main research problem and the research sub-problems.

2.2 Overview of the MBA Market

Two decades ago, MBA graduates were still something of a rarity. But at the rate that they are now pouring out of South African business schools, they are becoming commonplace (*Financial Mail*, 2001:36). The exponential growth rate in the number of South African MBA graduates over the past four years appears to be sustained, with the year on year growth in number of MBA degrees awarded increasing 28% from 1999 to 2000, from 1254 to 1613 (Markinor, 2001). This growth rate of 28%, according to Markinor, suggests an increase in both demand for and supply of MBA degrees in South Africa.

In terms of absolute numbers of MBA degrees awarded in South Africa, the trend is strongly upward (Markinor, 2001). In 1997, 689 new graduates entered the job market.

Towards the end of 1998, this number had grown by 32% to 909, and at the end of 1999, the annual growth increased by 38% to 1254 (Markinor, 2001). According to Markinor (2001), the figures for 2000 appear to indicate that this escalation is less marked than in the previous two years, suggesting that market demand, while increasing, is growing at a slower rate of increase than in previous years.

Selecting an MBA service provider is a difficult task for many prospective MBA students owing to the rapid increase in the number of business schools offering an MBA programme, and the type and variety of the programmes offered (*Professional Management Review*, 2001:24). Prospective students use a variety of brand attribute criteria when selecting an MBA, which may include among others:

- Perceived quality of the programme.
- National and international standing of the business school.
- Academic quality of the faculty.
- Physical resources provided.
- Quality of graduates.
- The business school's philosophy on personal development.
- Evidence of continual intellectual development as measured by the research of the staff involved in teaching (*Professional Management Review*, 2001:24).

The impact of international expansion is being felt throughout the world, and business schools that once competed in their home country are now expanding internationally. Woods (2000:12), states that cross-border competition among the world's top business

schools and dramatic changes in the content and delivery of their programmes, along with a shift in students' goals, are transforming what was once one of academia's more staid degrees into the campus siren.

Business schools in South Africa will have to adapt very quickly to the forces impacting on the industry. The need to remain at the frontiers of management thinking, up to date with the latest technologies and environmental changes, is imperative if they wish to avoid obsolescence (Strasheim, 2001). According to Strasheim (2001), business schools that are service oriented will prosper, because the customer chain is becoming more discerning. This implies that prospective MBA students will be influenced by various perceived brand image attributes and associations of MBA service providers during the selection process, all of which will contribute collectively towards their final decision.

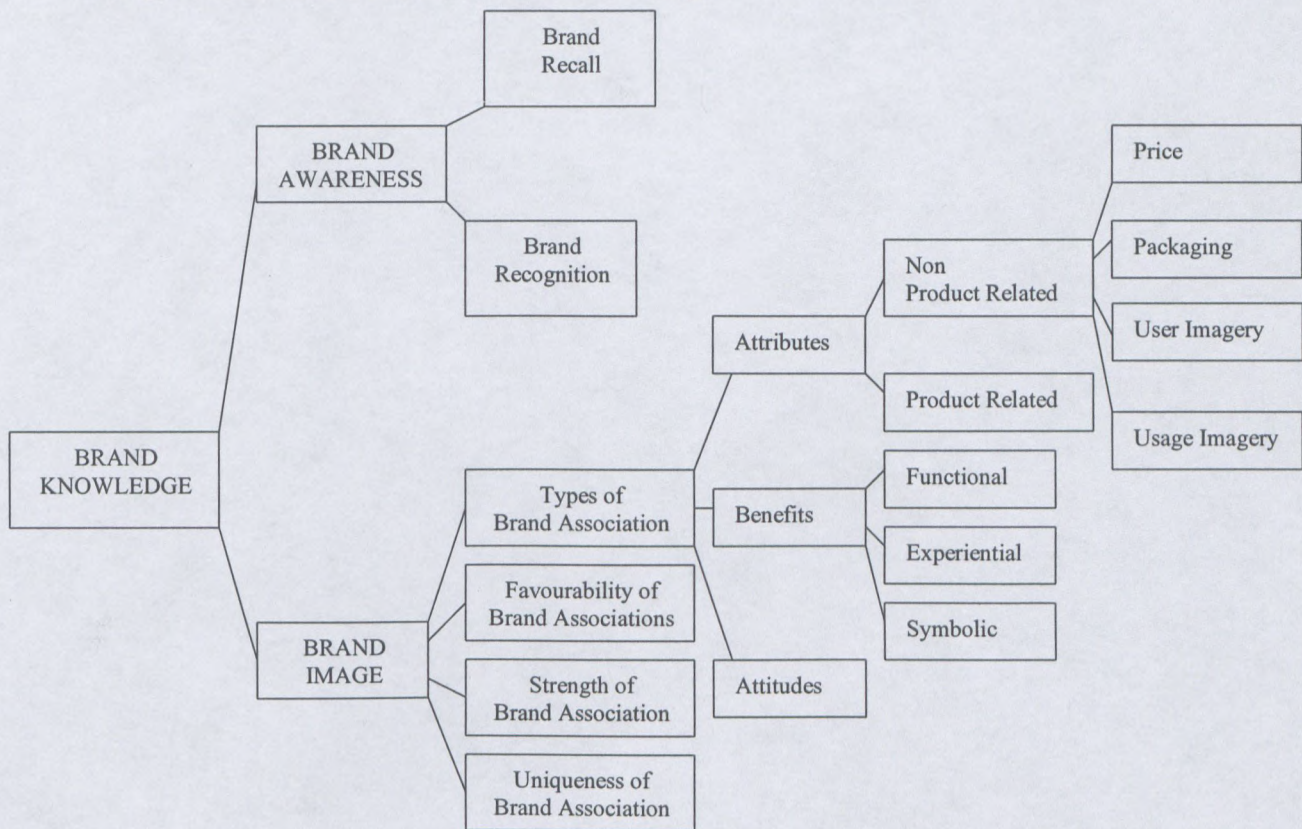
The literature review, which follows, will analyse the key factors relating to branding, and will place specific emphasis on brand image and its impact on customer-based brand equity.

2.3 Brand Knowledge Model

The Dimensions of Brand Knowledge Model as formulated by Kevin Lane Keller (1993:7), is used as the basis for the structure and flow of the literature search. The rationale and justification for this approach are twofold: the model presents a logical

structure and approach, while at the same time demonstrating the visual complexity surrounding the study of brand image.

Figure 2-1. Dimensions of Brand Knowledge



Source: Keller (1993).

The starting point of Keller's model is the presumption of brand knowledge, and that understanding the content and structure of brand knowledge is important because they influence what comes to mind when a consumer thinks about a brand (Keller, 1993:7). Keller states further that the most widely accepted conceptualisations of memory structure involve some type of associative model formulation, and cites the "associative

network memory model” which views semantic memory or knowledge as consisting of a set of nodes and links. Nodes are stored information connected by links that vary in strength, and a “spreading activation” process from node to node determines the extent of retrieval in memory.

A node becomes a potential source of activation for other nodes when internal information is retrieved from long-term memory. Activation can spread from this node to other linked nodes in memory. When the activation of another node exceeds some threshold level, the information contained in that node is recalled. Thus, the strength of association between the activated node and all linked nodes determines the extent of this “spreading activation” and the particular information that can be retrieved from memory (Keller, 1993:3).

2.4 Brand Knowledge

It may take many years and a considerable amount of investment in marketing communications and promotional effort to build a successful brand knowledge structure, but only a brief moment to destroy it. Organisations protect brand knowledge structure, as this is what makes leading brands so valuable, and why leading marketing companies place so much emphasis on brand building. The stronger the brand knowledge structure, the stronger the potential profit-generating future of the brand. Kotler (2000:404) defines a brand as a name, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of these, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those

of competitors. Kotler states further, that a brand identifies the seller or market, and can be a name, trademark, logo, or other symbol (Kotler, 2000:404).

According to Kotler, a brand is complex and can convey up to six levels of meaning as follows:

- Attributes: For example, Mercedes may suggest expensive, prestige, highly engineered motorcars.
- Benefits: Attributes may be transferred into functional and emotional benefits.
- Values: Mercedes stands for high performance, safety, and prestige.
- Culture: Mercedes represents German culture: organized, efficient.
- Personality: Mercedes may suggest a specific personality typology.
- User: The brand suggests the type of consumer who buys or uses the product.

The complexity of the interrelationship of these individual brand components reflects the difficulty in establishing the correct brand identity and value proposition from the perspective of the marketer of the brand, and the evaluation of the value proposition by the consumer of the brand.

Consistent with an associative network memory model, brand knowledge is conceptualised by Keller (1993) as consisting of a brand node in memory to which a variety of associations is linked. According to Sen (1999:1), consumer awareness of a brand name is the critical first step in the development of brand knowledge, and moreover, the brand-related information that consumers acquire over time tends to be organised in their memories around the brand name. This interactive effect of brand

name suggestiveness and decision goal is accompanied by systematic shifts in the extent to and the manner in which individuals process attribute information and identify such information (Sen, 1999:2).

Sen states that the encoding of brand information is also likely to depend on the types of decision tasks and accompanying encoding goals that characterise consumers' initial encounters with the brand (Sen, 1999:2). Further research cited by Sen which was conducted by Westenberg and Koele (1994), suggests that the type of brand information most strongly associated with the brand name will depend on whether consumers acquire brand knowledge primarily through judgement (e.g., evaluating brand claims in an advertising context), or choice (e.g., from a set of brands in a purchase context) tasks.

When consumers judge a set of brands, they process information holistically or by brand, generating global evaluations for each brand (Sen, 1999:3). During choice, however, consumers process brand information more dimensionally or by attribute, focusing on those distinctive features of the brands that provide the greatest justification for choice (Sen, 1999:3). Therefore, if brand knowledge develops primarily through judgement tasks, brand names are likely to be associated with primarily abstract information, such as global evaluations and their constituent attribute-specific abstractions. However, if brand knowledge results primarily from choice tasks, then brand names are likely to be associated primarily with concrete attribute-specific brand information that helps distinguish the brands from their competitors in terms of choice worthiness, such as factual details, single-fact representations, and perhaps their abstractions (Sen, 1999:3).

Sen concludes that when knowledge about each brand in an efficient set is developed through a choice task, specific brand names serve as a powerful cue for the semantically related but nondiagnostic factual attribute information at the point of evaluation (Sen, 1999:5). For successful brands with well-established memory structures in most consumers' minds, the brand name's suggestiveness may not be as critical to the retrieval of brand information (Broniarczyk & Alba, 1994:26).

2.5 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness measures the number of people who know the brand and what the brand stands for, and are who aware of what promises this sign has given (Kapferer, 1997:137). A brand with no awareness is just something stuck on a product, meaningless and speechless. Kapferer distinguishes three types of awareness:

- “top of mind” awareness, which measures whether the brand is the first to come to the mind of people who are interviewed on the brands of a given category;
- “unaided” awareness measures the brand’s impact, i.e., to what extent it is spontaneously associated with a given product category;
- “aided” awareness, which consists in asking the target-audience if they have already heard of certain brands or if they have at least heard of their names.

Research conducted by Rossiter and Percy (1987), suggests that brand awareness is essential for the communications process to occur as it precedes all other steps in the process. Without brand awareness occurring, no other communication effects can occur, and for a consumer to purchase a brand he/she must first be aware of the brand. Brand attitude cannot be formed, and intention to purchase cannot occur unless brand awareness has occurred (Rossiter & Percy, 1987); (Rossiter *et al.*, 1991).

In memory theory, brand awareness is positioned as a vital first step in building the “bundle” of associations which is attached to the brand in memory which is reflected in the research findings in this field by Stokes (1985). Brand awareness is predicted on the existence of a brand name node that often occupies a central position in consumers’ brand memory structures as different types of brand information become associated with it during brand encounters (Keller, 1993:3). Consequently, the brand name frequently serves as a powerful and reliable retrieval cue for associated brand information (Keller, 1998:3).

2.5.1 Brand Awareness and Consideration Set Association

Brand awareness has been hypothesised by several researchers to play a crucial role in determining the consideration set; which is considered by these researchers to be the small set of brands to which a consumer gives serious attention when making a purchase (Howard & Sheth, 1969 , Narayana & Markin, 1975). Although somewhat dated, these seminal works are still appropriate and hold relevance even today in the field of

consideration set research. The composition of this small set of brands, which are considered during decision-making is important, and a brand that is not considered cannot be chosen (Baker *et al.*, 1986). Furthermore, the probability of brand's being chosen is a function of the number of other brands in the consideration set. In a situation where the consumer is aware of a number of brands which fit the relevant criteria, the consumer is unlikely to spend much time and effort in seeking out information on unfamiliar brands (Macdonald & Sharp, 1994). Additionally, the strength of awareness of the brands within the consideration set can also be significant. Further research conducted by Wilson (1981), confirms the importance of top-of-mind awareness in a study which found that the higher the position of the brand in the consumer's mind measured by unaided recall, the higher the purchase intention and the higher the relative purchase of the brand.

Nedungadi (1990:263), contended that choice researchers have largely ignored a vital component of the choice process - the stage of consideration-set formation prior to evaluation and choice. His view is predicated on the belief that factors other than those traditionally examined can often influence brand consideration and then carry over to affect brand choice. Specifically, he proposes that when choice is memory based, memory factors can shape brand retrieval and consideration and may affect choice without any changes in brand evaluations.

Brand awareness, according to Keller, can also affect decisions about brands within the consideration set, and consumers may employ a heuristic to purchase only familiar, well-established brands (Keller, 1993:4). This decision is exacerbated when considering the

selection of an MBA service provider, and is further compounded by the unknown quality and content of the programmes of certain providers. Familiarity, in the form of brand awareness, may affect choice within the consideration set by influencing perceived quality. This is reflected in a consumer choice study conducted by Hoyer and Brown (1990), where over 70% of consumers selected a known brand of peanut butter from among a choice of three, even though another brand was “objectively” better quality (as determined by blind taste tests), and even though they had neither bought nor used the brand before. This result is even more surprising considering the subjects were given the opportunity to taste all the brands; simply being a known brand dramatically affected their evaluation of the brand.

It can be therefore be argued, that without brand awareness occurring, brand attitude and brand image cannot be formed. However, equally important is the importance of brand awareness as a heuristic which can affect inclusion in the consideration set, and in many instances may be sufficient by itself to determine choice from the consideration set. This means that brand awareness may possibly determine not only entry to the consideration set, but may also determine which brand is chosen from the consideration set.

2.5.2 Brand Awareness and Competitive Advantage

Aaker argues strongly that brand name awareness is one of the major brand assets which add value to the product or service and/or its customers (Aaker, 1991b). Investment in brand awareness can lead to sustainable competitive advantage, and to long term value

for the organisation. There are, however, certain practical difficulties inherent in brand building and demonstrating the value of assets such as brand awareness, and these include, amongst others, the problem of producing short-term profit results by the organisation.

2.5.3 Brand Recall and Brand Recognition

Keller's Dimensions of Brand Knowledge model cited in Figure 2-1, reflects two additional extensions of brand awareness, namely brand recall and brand recognition. Keller states that brand recognition relates to consumers' ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue (Keller, 1993:4). Brand recognition requires that consumers correctly discriminate the brand as having been seen or heard previously (Keller, 1993:4). Brand recall relates to consumers' ability to retrieve the brand when given the product category, the needs fulfilled by the category, or some other type of probe as a cue (Keller, 1993:4). Brand recall, therefore, requires that consumers correctly generate the brand from memory.

The difficulty that lies in understanding these two types of brand awareness, and which of these occurs, will depend on the choice situation. This is reflected in the research conducted by Rossiter and Percy (1987), which indicated that brand awareness does not necessarily require recall of brand name, and that the consumer may identify a brand by its corporate colours, packaging, logo or location amongst other identifying factors.

Brand recognition tends to occur in stimulus-based situations, and brand recall occurs in memory-based situations.

In summary, brand awareness plays an important role in consumer decision-making for three major reasons:

- ❑ It is important that consumers think of the brand when thinking about the product category.
- ❑ Brand awareness can affect decisions about brands in the consideration set, even if there are essentially no other brand associations.
- ❑ Brand awareness affects consumer decision-making by influencing the strength of brand associations in the brand image (Keller, 1993:4).

2.6 Brand Identity

One of the limitations of Keller's model is that it does not address the question of brand identity. Brand identity is an important consideration for the organisation and Aaker defines brand identity as "a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organisation members" (Aaker, 1996:68). Aaker states further that brand identity should help establish a relationship between the brand and the customer by generating a value proposition involving functional, emotional or self-expressive benefits (Aaker, 1996:68).

Brand identity, according to Keller, is represented as the entire set of brand elements, which includes the brand name, logo and symbol, characters, slogans and packaging (Keller, 1998:2). Keller states that the brand identity reflects the contribution of all brand elements to awareness and image, and that the cohesiveness of the brand identity depends on the extent to which the brand elements are consistent (Keller, 1998:3).

Kapferer (1997) postulates that brand identity will be clearly defined once the following questions are answered:

- ❑ What is the brand's particular vision and aim?
- ❑ What makes it different?
- ❑ What need is the brand fulfilling?
- ❑ What is its permanent nature?
- ❑ What are its value or values?
- ❑ What are the signs which make it recognisable?

Brand identity is viewed from the perspective of the sender, and the purpose is to specify the brand's meaning, aim and self-image (Kapferer, 1997:95). Image is both the result and interpretation thereof, and in terms of brand management, identity precedes image.

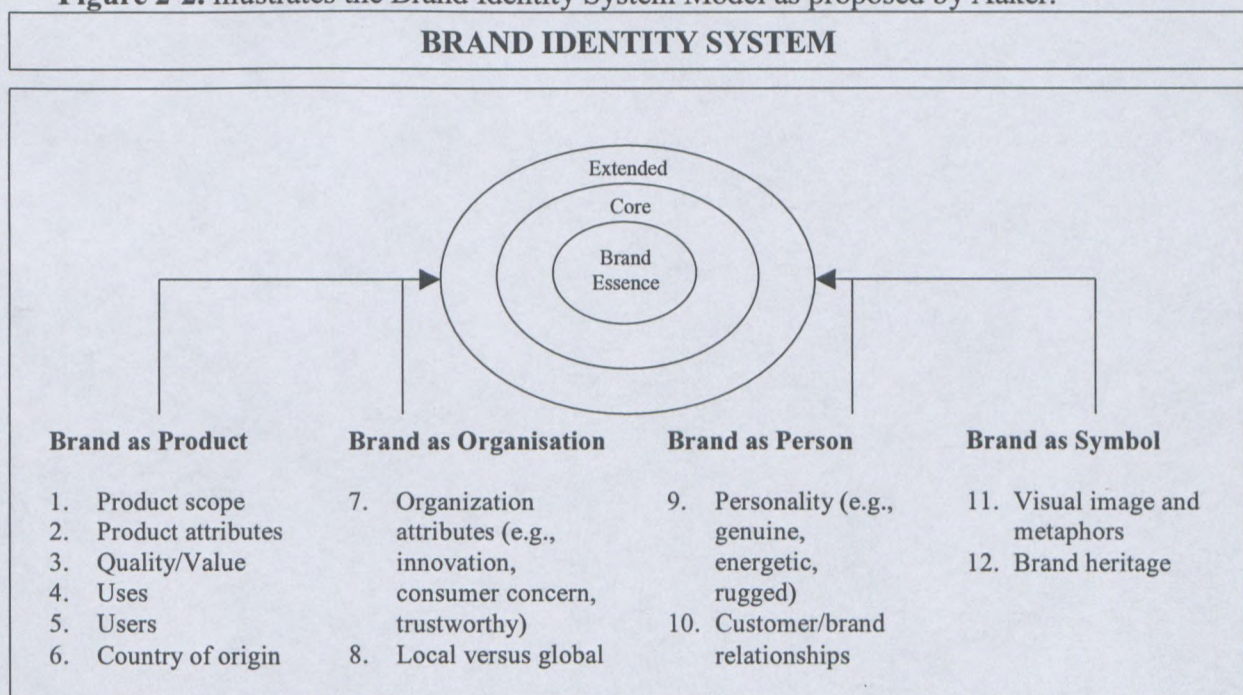
2.6.1 Dimensions of Brand Identity

Aaker (1996:68) proposes that brand identity consists of twelve dimensions organised around four perspectives:

- ❑ The brand-as-product (product scope, product attributes, quality/value, uses, users, country of origin).
- ❑ Brand-as-organisation (organisational attributes, local versus global).
- ❑ Brand-as-person (brand personality, brand-customer relationships).
- ❑ Brand-as-symbol (visual imagery/metaphors and brand heritage).

Furthermore, he states that the brand identity structure includes a core and extended identity. The core identity, according to Aaker, is the central, timeless essence of the brand, and is most likely to remain constant as the brand travels to new markets and products. The extended identity includes brand identity elements, organised into cohesive and meaningful groupings, that provide texture and completeness (Aaker, 1996:69).

Figure 2-2. illustrates the Brand Identity System Model as proposed by Aaker.



Source: Aaker, & Joachimsthaler, 2000:44

In addition to the twelve dimensions organised under the brand as product, person, and symbol, the brand identity model contains three types of benefits and a relationship between the customer and the brand, making a total of 16 potential identity-related dimensions. Aaker emphasises the fact that all of these dimensions can be helpful in some contexts, but none of them are so useful that they need to appear in all contexts. Aaker warns that too often there is a compulsion on the part of brand strategists to use all constructs, and the result can be a brand identity that is forced, containing elements that are trivial, irrelevant, and sometimes ridiculous (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000:57).

All these dimensions do not have to appear in a given brand identity, rather each dimension should be evaluated by the following standards to see if it will be helpful:

- ☐ Does it capture an element important to the brand and its ability to provide customer value or support customer relationships?
- ☐ Does it help differentiate the brand from its competitors?
- ☐ Does it resonate with the customer?
- ☐ Does it energise employees?
- ☐ Is it believable?

Which dimensions to use will, according to Aaker, depend on the context. For example, in services, organisational associations are usually helpful, but in consumer packaged goods they are less likely to be relevant (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000:57). This would tend to imply that in a high involvement purchase such as the selection of an MBA

service provider, the organisation attribute of trustworthiness is significant in both the selection and purchase process.

There are however certain dangers that can be attached to a limited approach to the concept of a brand and in particular, brand identity. These “traps”, as referred to by Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000), may consist of the following:

- A brand image trap whereby the brand image becomes the brand identity rather than just one input to be considered.
- A brand position trap which occurs when the search for a brand identity becomes a search for a brand position, and the goal then becomes an advertising tag line rather than a brand identity.
- An external perspective trap when companies fail to realise the role that a brand identity can play in helping an organisation understand its basic values.
- A product-attribute fixation trap whereby the strategic and tactical management of the brand is focused solely on product attributes and is often caused in part by a reliance on research focusing on attributes.

2.6.2 Brand Identity Prism

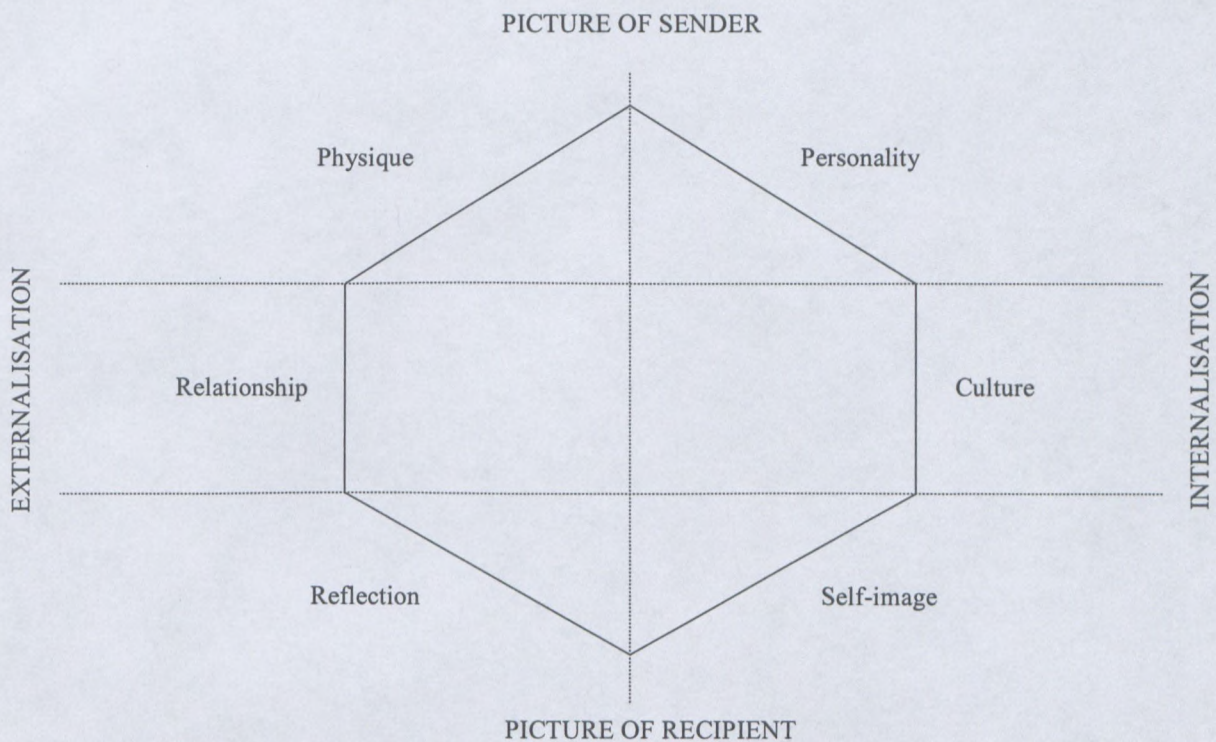
An additional dimension of brand identity is included by Kapferer (1997:100), who states that the brand identity concept is crucial for three reasons:

- ❑ A brand needs to be durable.
- ❑ A brand needs to send out coherent signs.

- A brand needs to be realistic.

The brand identity concept is thus a defence against the risks of an idealised, fickle or opportunistic brand image. Kapferer proposes that brand identity can be represented by a hexagonal prism as represented in Figure 2-3.

Figure 2-3. Brand Identity Prism



Source: Kapferer, 1997:100

Figure 2-3. reflects the following:

- A brand has physical qualities, and is made up of either salient objective features or emerging ones. The physique is the backbone of the brand and its tangible added value.
- A brand has a personality of its own, and by communicating it, gradually builds up character.

- A brand has its own culture, from which every product derives. Culture is what links the brand to the organisation, especially when the two bear the same name. This is a crucial concept in understanding the impact of the link between the brand (and the perceived image of the brand by the consumer), and the culture of the organisation. If the organisation is not able to create a significant distinction between the brand and the corporation itself, where, for example, the corporation is viewed as old-fashioned, it will find difficulty in establishing the brand itself as trendy and modern.
- A brand is a relationship, and is often the focal point of interaction between consumers and corporations, especially in the service sector and retailers.
- A brand is a reflection, and consumers often create perceived typologies as appropriate to specific brands
- A brand speaks to and reflects the self-image of the consumer. The premise is that through our attitudes towards certain brands, we develop a certain type of inner relationship with ourselves. This self-image factor may therefore become an important motive in the selection of an MBA service provider, owing to the perception by the potential student of the improved self-image and status that can be derived from direct association with a specific MBA brand. This implies that the perception of an improved self-image that may be derived from obtaining an MBA from UCT for example, may become a strong motivator in terms of the final selection of an MBA programme.

2.6.3 The Brand Value Proposition

The brand identity needs to provide a value proposition to the consumer. This value proposition is a statement of the functional, emotional, and self-expressive benefits delivered by the brand that provide value to the customer. An effective value proposition should lead to a brand-customer relationship and drive purchase decisions (Aaker, 1996:95). These central concepts are described as follows:

- **Functional Benefits:** These are benefits based on a product attribute that provides functional utility to the customer and will usually relate directly to the functions performed by the product or service for the consumer. In a high-involvement decision making process such as the selection of an MBA service provider, it may be safe to assume that functional benefits that provide functional utility to the potential student will have a direct link to the decision.
- **Emotional Benefits:** Emotional benefits add richness and depth to the experience of owning and using the brand. This implies that in order to discover what emotional benefits are or could be associated with a brand, the focus of the research needs to be on feelings.
- **Self-Expressive Benefits:** A brand can provide a self-expressive benefit by providing a way for a person to communicate his or her self-image. It is this self-expressive factor that can manifest itself in the mind of the consumer, and may be described as typical of that of a potential MBA student who wants to align self-image with a specific MBA brand.

- **The Role of Price:** Price is also directly related to the benefits that the brand provides, particularly in relation to the benefits that can be derived from a specific MBA service provider. Price, according to Aaker is a complex construct, and while a higher price can reduce the value proposition, it can also signal higher quality (Aaker, 1996:102). The issue for consideration is whether the value proposition is driven by benefits or price, and furthermore which benefits are likely to influence the selection of an MBA service provider by a potential student.
- **Brand Credibility:** Credibility is an important consideration factor in the brand identity system, and organisational attributes such as innovation and trust are important in providing credibility.

2.6.4 The Brand as Organisation

Brands need to differentiate themselves in order to maintain competitive advantage and one answer is to base the brand identity in part on the organisation behind the brand (Aaker, 1996:115). Organisational characteristics can provide the basis for this required differentiation, value proposition formulation and consumer relationship. The selection of an MBA service provider will require an analysis of the following organisational characteristics on the part of a potential MBA student:

- **Values and Culture:** The traditional values and culture of an MBA service provider may be important consideration factors in the decision-making process.
- **People:** The people employed by the service provider provide credibility to the organisation. This includes the style of both academic and practical delivery of the

programmes (in the case of faculty staff), as well as the attribute of performance of all other support staff.

- **Programmes:** The quality and relevance of all academic programmes.
- **Reputation:** The reputation of the organisation.

Associations driven by the organisation in contrast to associations tied to product benefits are less tangible, more subjective, and less tied to a product class (Aaker, 1996:116).

To summarise brand identity it can be stated that the identity of a brand provides the direction, purpose and meaning for the brand and is central to a brand's strategic vision; it is the driver of one of the four principal dimensions of brand equity associations, which are the heart and soul of the brand (Aaker, 1996:68).

2.7 Brand Image

The establishment of a strong and positive brand identity that is communicated effectively to the determined target market, is a crucial prerequisite to the establishment of a positive brand image in the minds of potential consumers.

Though brand image has long been recognised as an important concept in marketing, Keller states that there is less agreement on its appropriate definition (Keller, 1993:4). Keller's model of the dimensions of brand knowledge cited in Figure 2-1 previously, is based on an associative network memory model, which defines brand image as perceptions about a brand as reflected in memory by the brand associations held in consumer memory. Brand associations are the other informational nodes linked to the

brand in memory and contain the meaning of the brand for consumers. The favourability, strength, and uniqueness of brand associations are the dimensions distinguishing brand knowledge that play an important role in determining the differential response that ultimately makes up brand equity, especially in high involvement decisions (Keller, 1993:4).

2.7.1 Brand Associations

Brand associations are distinguished through different forms, and Keller suggests that one way to distinguish these brand associations is through their level of abstraction; that is, by how much information is summarised or subsumed in the association (Keller, 1993:4). These brand associations are classified into three major categories as follows:

1. Attributes: these are the descriptive features that characterise a product or service, and include what a consumer thinks the product or service is or has, and what is involved with regard to its purchase or use. These attributes are further distinguished according to how directly they relate to product or service performance. Product-related attributes are defined as the ingredients necessary for performing the product or service function sought by the consumer or user. Non-product related attributes are defined as external aspects of the product or service that relate to its purchase or consumption.

These beliefs can include many of the product-related attributes for the relevant brands, as well as more descriptive attributes that do not necessarily relate to product or service

performance. Certain benefits may be considered essential for all brands in the category, such as quality of the course content of an MBA programme, while a specific brand may be considered most representative of the category itself. This factor is highlighted in the both the Markinor Survey commissioned by the *Financial Mail* (Anon, 2001b), and the later published MBA survey published in the *Professional Management Review* (Anon, 2001a). Both reports differentiate between the so-called “leading business schools”, for example, Witwatersrand University, University of Cape Town, University of Stellenbosch, and the other “newer” or “emerging” business schools (which include overseas-based business schools). These reports have created the initial perception among potential MBA students that all MBA service providers should be measured against the benchmark of these defined “leading universities”. This benchmark categorisation may create a further barrier to entry for new business schools among potential MBA students who may not include such schools in their consideration set.

The number of competing brands in a product category can affect consumers’ ability to recall communication effects for a brand by creating interference in memory, but Aaker (1991b), shows that these interference effects can be overcome through the use of advertising retrieval cues. This implies distinctive advertising execution information that is present when the consumer actually makes a brand evaluation.

The four main types of non-product related attributes are:

Price Information: Price is an important attribute because consumers often have strong beliefs about the price and value of a brand.

Packaging: This is considered part of the purchase process, but does not necessarily relate to product performance.

User Imagery: This relates to the type of person that uses the product or service, and may be directly relevant to a potential MBA student.

Usage Imagery: This relates to where and in what types of situation the product or service is used (Keller, 1993:4).

2. Benefits

These are the personal values consumers attach to the product or service attributes and reflect what consumers think the product or service can do for them. These benefits can be classified into three further categories:

Functional Benefits: These are the more intrinsic advantages of product or service consumption and usually correspond to the product-related attributes.

Experiential Benefits: These relate to the usage and feel of the product or service, and also usually correspond to the product-related attributes.

Symbolic Benefits: They are the more extrinsic advantages of product or service consumption, and usually correspond to non-product related attributes and relate to underlying needs for social approval or personal expression and outer-directed self-esteem (Keller, 1993:4). This may be of value to an MBA student in terms of the prestige factor and exclusivity attached to a specific MBA service provider.

3. Attitudes

Brand attitudes are considered to be the most abstract and highest- level type of brand associations. Brand attitudes are described as consumer's overall evaluations of a brand, and these brand attitudes are important as they often form the basis for consumer behaviour and subsequent brand choice (Keller, 1993:5).

In general, attitudes may be described as an expression of inner feelings that reflect whether a person is favourably or unfavourably predisposed to some "object" such as a brand or service.

2.7.2 Favourability of Brand Associations

Brand associations differ according to how favourably they are evaluated, and the success of any marketing programme is reflected in the creation of favourable brand associations, such as when consumers believe that the brand possess attributes and benefits that satisfy their requirements so that a positive overall brand attitude is formed (Keller, 1998:106). This favourability, in turn, will be a function of both the desirability and deliverability of the brand association. The brand or product should also deliver on the desired association and depends on the actual or potential ability of the product or brand to perform, the current or future prospects of communicating that performance, and the sustainability of the actual and communicated performance over time (Keller, 1998:107).

It can safely be assumed, that a high involvement purchase requires the product to perform at the level expected and stated, and therefore the market offering must be able to support the desired association. The second factor affecting deliverability cited by Keller, is the current or future prospects of communicating information to create or strengthen the desired associations, and the key issue according to Keller, is consumers' perceptions of the brand and the resulting brand associations (Keller, 1998:107).

It is difficult to try to create an association that is not consistent with existing consumer knowledge or one that consumers, for whatever reason, have trouble believing in. This implies that the communicability of a brand association can depend on several factors, but most important is whether consumers (and a potential MBA student in particular), can be given a compelling reason and understandable rationale why the brand will deliver the desired benefit. This implies that MBA service providers must provide factual, verifiable evidence or proof in support of their marketing communications in order to create believability in the brand and its desired associations.

The third factor affecting the deliverability of a brand association is the sustainability of the actual and communicated performance over time. This is also a critical concept for consideration, and questions whether the favourability of a brand association can be reinforced and strengthened over time. Factors such as internal commitment and the use of resources, as well as external market forces, will affect sustainability of the brand associations. Keller emphasises the fact that not all associations for a brand will be relevant and valued in a purchase or consumption decision, and that this may be

particularly true for certain non-product-related associations (Keller, 1998:107). Furthermore, the evaluations of brand associations may be situation or context-dependent and vary according to the particular goals that consumers have in their purchase or consumption decision.

2.7.3 Strength of Brand Associations

Associations can be characterised by the strength of connection to the brand node, and, according to Keller, the strength of brand associations is critical, as determinant of what information will be recalled by consumers and can therefore affect their brand decisions (Keller, 1998:103). Consumer beliefs about brand attributes and benefits can be formed in three main ways according to Keller:

On the basis of their direct experience with the brand, as well as on the basis of some form of communication about the brand, and also on the basis of some assumptions or inferences made from some other brand-related information. This is obviously only applicable when the consumer is able to have a direct experience; for example, using a consumable branded product such as peanut butter, or even a high involvement purchase such as a motorcar which can be test driven. However, in the case of the selection of an MBA service provider, most potential users will have to rely on factors such as word-of-mouth, and communication with support staff of the MBA service provider. It is interesting to note that Keller states that company-influenced sources of information such

as advertising are often likely to create the weakest associations and thus may be the most easily changed (Keller, 1998:103).

Other factors that influence the strength of brand associations include the quantity and quality of information encoding and processing as it enters consumers' memory and where it is actually located as a result of this processing. One of the key factors in the determination of the strength of a newly formed association will be the content, organisation, and strength of existing brand associations in memory. One reason why personal experiences create such strong brand associations, according to Keller, is that information about the product is likely to be related to existing knowledge owing to its self-relevance (Keller, 1998:105). Although personal experiences as such, with regard to an MBA service provider may not be direct, the very nature of the high-involvement search process would tend to indicate a relatively high level of involvement on the part of the potential MBA student, and therefore a correspondingly high level of brand association.

In summary, it can be safely assumed that there are a number of factors that will affect the strength of brand associations. Possibly the two most important factors are relevance of the brand information and the consistency with which that brand information is presented to consumers at any one point in time, as well as over time.

2.7.4 Uniqueness of Brand Associations

All products can be differentiated to some extent, but not all brand differences are meaningful or worthwhile (Kotler, 2000:298). According to Manning, customers are increasingly discerning, demanding, and disloyal and therefore the “value” a product or brand offers is a matter of consumer perceptions and the company’s positioning relative to competitors (Manning, 1998:213). The way a product is perceived – that is, how it is positioned in the mind of the consumer is probably more important to its ultimate success than are its actual characteristics (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1991:170).

Keller notes that the strength of the brand associations with the relevant product category is an important determinant of brand awareness (Keller, 1993), which is a forerunner to the establishment of brand knowledge.

Brand associations can have a positive influence on consumer choice, preferences and intention to purchase, willingness to pay a price premium for the brand, acceptance of brand extensions and recommendation of the brand to others. This is reflected in the research findings of several notable researchers (Park & Srinivasan, 1994; Cobb-Walgren *et al.*, 1995; Agarwal & Rao, 1996; Hutton, 1997; Yoo *et al.*, 2000).

2.7.5 Brand Image as a Forerunner to Brand Equity

Biel (1992:7), states that it is useful to recognise that the equity of a brand is driven by brand image, which is a consumer concept, and that any expectation of the cash flow premium enjoyed by a successful brand ultimately depends upon consumer behaviour. Consumer behaviour is, at root, driven by perceptions of a brand, which Biel describes as the cluster of attributes and associations that consumers connect with the brand name (Biel, 1992:8). The image of a brand can be described as having three contributing sub images:

The image of the provider of the product or service, or corporate image.

The image of the user.

The image of the product / service itself.

However, Biel states that the relative contribution of these three elements varies by product category and by brand (Biel, 1992:8). The justification for collecting and measuring brand image data generally reflects a marketing philosophy suggesting that the underlying motivation of consumers towards the purchase and use of products and services depends to a large degree on the perceptions of and beliefs in those products or services (Roe & Morgan, 1990:1).

In summary, brand image is created by advertising, usage, word-of-mouth, and very other exposure the brand receives. These influence the market for potential MBA students as a

group and create the perceptions that form the basis for both consideration set formulation and the decision-making process.

2.8 Brand Equity

The concept of brand equity has been defined in a number of different ways for a number of different purposes, and no common viewpoint has emerged of how brand equity should be conceptualised and measured (Keller, 1998). According to Keller (1998), most marketing observers agree that brand equity is defined in terms of the marketing effects uniquely attributable to the brand. Brand equity relates to the fact that different outcomes result from the marketing of a product or service because of its brand name or some other brand element, as compared to outcomes if that product or service did not have that brand identification. Brand equity is regarded as a very important concept in business practice as well as in academic research because marketers can gain competitive advantage through successful brands (Lassar *et al*, 1995). While many researchers agree on the notion of the value of brand equity, it is a difficult concept to grasp in part owing to the considerable definitional problems (Pitt, 2001:39). An accepted definition of brand equity is given by Aaker (1996:7), as a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to (or subtract from) the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers.

The assets and liabilities discussed by Aaker include brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand associations and image (brand personality), use satisfaction and

other proprietary assets such as patents, trademarks and channel relationships. The problem with this definition is that it confuses the beneficiaries of the value of “the set of assets and liabilities”, inasmuch as it states that the value is provided “to a firm”, “and/or”, “to that firm’s customers” (Pitt, 2001:39). Furthermore, Pitt questions the usefulness and validity of a definition that envisages value that may be provided both to the firm and its customers; provided to the firm but not its customers; or provided to customers but not the firm.

While assets and liabilities generally represent values for the firm rather than for the customer, it is valuable that a customer is brand loyal, but not clear whether brand loyalty is particularly valuable to an individual customer. The value to the customer is evidenced in the ability of the brand to fulfil fundamental branding functions, and meet the additional expected psychological or economic benefits. Although a number of different views of brand equity have been expressed, they all are generally consistent with the basic notion that brand equity represents the “added value” endowed to a product as a result of past investments in the marketing of the brand (Keller, 1998:44).

Brand equity has been described as the incremental utility or value added to a product by its brand name, such as Coke, Kodak, Levi’s and Nike (Farquhar, Han, & Ijiri, 1991; Kamakura & Russell, 1993; Park & Srinivasan, 1994). This has suggested that brand equity can be estimated by subtracting the utility of physical attributes of the product from the total utility of a brand. Brand equity can, therefore, as an asset of the company, increase cash flow according to the research conducted by Simon and Sullivan (1993).

From a behavioural viewpoint, brand equity is critically important to make points of differentiation that will lead to subsequent competitive advantages based on non-price competition (Aaker, 1991a).

2.8.1 Brand Assets and Brand Value.

Kapferer (1997:34), asserts that it is necessary to make the distinction between brand assets and brand value, and that the measurement of brand assets is based on the final buyers and the distribution of the brand. Brand assets, according to Kapferer, can be summarised as follows:

Brand awareness + image + perceived quality + evocations + familiarity, liking = Brand Assets. Brand added value, perceived by consumers – costs of branding – cost of invested capital = Brand Financial Value (Brand Equity).

From the above analysis it becomes apparent that brand equity by its very definition has a need for two perspectives. The first is to define and view brand equity from the perspective of the organisation, and the second, that brand equity should also be analysed and viewed from the perspective of the customer.

2.8.2 Customer-Based Brand Equity

The framework of brand equity in the context of this research approaches brand equity from the perspective of the consumer. The rationale for this is the fact that brand image is perceived by the consumer, and is therefore directly related to customer-based brand equity as opposed to organisational brand equity.

Customer-based brand equity is defined as the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand (Keller, 1998:45). A brand is said to have positive customer-based brand equity when customers react more favourably to a product and the way it is marketed when the brand is identified, as compared to when it is not (e.g., when it is attributed to a fictitiously named or unnamed version of the product). Thus, a brand (such as a well-known MBA), with positive customer-based brand equity, might result in potential MBA students being more willing to seek the brand, or being less sensitive to price increases. Conversely, a brand is said to have negative customer-based brand equity if consumers react less favourably to marketing activity for the brand, as compared to an unnamed or fictitiously named version of the product.

Establishing brand awareness and a “positive brand image” (i.e., favourable, strong, and unique brand associations) in consumer memory creates different types of customer-based brand equity, depending upon which marketing mix element is under consideration. According to Keller (1993:4), high levels of brand awareness and a positive brand image

should increase the probability of brand choice, as well as greater consumer loyalty and decrease vulnerability to competitive marketing actions.

2.8.3 Measuring Brand Equity

In spite of the increasing importance of the brand equity concept, an instrument to measure brand equity from a customer perspective has been lacking (Lassar *et al*, 1995:11). They cite the difficulty of measurement because the source of brand equity is often related to customer perceptions. Their analysis of customer-based brand equity led them to the following conclusions:

- ❑ Brand equity refers to consumer perceptions, rather than any objective indicators.
- ❑ Brand equity refers to a global value associated with a brand.
- ❑ The global value associated with the brand stems from the brand name, and not only from physical aspects of the brand.
- ❑ Brand equity is not absolute, but relative to competition.
- ❑ Brand equity positively influences financial performance.

The importance of their research is reflected in the fact that they developed a scale with not only a relatively small number of items, but which also provided the ability to measure the individual dimensions of brand equity.

The Park and Srinivasan Survey-Based Method for measuring and understanding brand equity uses a customer-based definition of brand equity as the added value endowed by

the brand to the product as perceived by a consumer. The survey measures brand equity as the difference between an individual consumer's overall brand preference and his or her brand preference on the basis of objectively measured product attribute levels (Park & Srinivasan, 1994).

2.9 Summary and Conclusions

The literature review has attempted to examine the complex nature of brand image and its importance and interrelationship with brand equity, and more specifically customer-based brand equity. The literature was examined from the perspective of Keller's Dimensions of Brand Knowledge Model (1993), which reflects brand knowledge as consisting of two components, namely, brand awareness and brand image.

Brand awareness is the first and obvious necessity for any brand to succeed, for without brand awareness the brand will not create any form of brand equity for an organisation or a potential consumer. Secondly, brand image was researched and analysed in terms of its extensive dimensionality, such as the types of brand associations, which include attributes, benefits and attitudes, and the favourability, strength and uniqueness of these brand associations.

The conclusions drawn from the literature review relative to the problem statement and the proposed hypothesis may be summarised as follows:

- Brand awareness is the first vital step in the marketing communications process, and without effective brand awareness no other effective communications can occur.
- Brand identity is created and developed by the organisation, while brand image is created through types of associations with the brand, both on the basis of actual association and through the perception of the brand in the mind of the consumer, or potential consumer.
- Brand equity may be defined from different viewpoints. There is general agreement amongst academics and practitioners that brand equity should be defined in terms of marketing effects uniquely attributable to a brand.
- Ultimately, however, it should be recognised that the power of a brand lies in the minds of consumers, and what they have experienced and learned about the brand over time. Therefore, a brand can be simply described as a reputation, and the strength and success of any brand is ultimately reliant upon its reputation to deliver and meet the expectations of the consumer.
- Strong brands excel on a number of dimensions. They understand exactly what their brands mean and stand for with consumers, and they appreciate the totality of their brand image – all of the different types of associations that consumers have for the brand (Keller, 2001). This implies that strong brands must build strong brand identities, and communicate their identity in the most positive and effective manner that will match the brand image as perceived by the consumer.
- In order to achieve a strong brand identity and create strong and positive customer-based brand equity, brands must be properly positioned in the marketplace and create optimal location in the minds of existing and potential consumers (Keller, 2001).

- The selection of an MBA service provider, let alone the selection of a specific provider, is a high-involvement purchase, and therefore requires a fairly long lead time in terms of research and final selection. Prospective MBA students are likely to research several attributes and benefits of potential MBA service providers during their search and decision-making process, and these are likely to be influenced by their collective brand image of the service provider.

The research, which follows, will investigate the perceptions of a sample of MBA graduates, who have graduated in South Africa during the past two years and will identify the important attributes of brand image that are likely to influence and build customer-based brand equity.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Research Methodology

The research design of this study will incorporate certain aspects of the Markinor study as appropriate to the main research problem stated in Chapter 1. The main research objective of this study is to identify which types of brand associations, and in particular, which attributes and perceived benefits of an MBA brand that constitute brand image, are most likely to influence the selection of an MBA service provider by a prospective MBA student. As stated previously in Chapter 1, this implies that there may be certain attributes and perceived benefits that may be more important than others for a prospective MBA student when considering and selecting an MBA service provider.

The research design will build on the conceptual dimensions of the Brand Knowledge Model (see figure 2-1) as proposed by Keller (1993), with the ultimate objective of presenting an extension to this model that will incorporate the additional dimension of brand identity. In the writer's opinion, one of the limitations of Keller's model, is that it neither addresses the issue of brand identity, nor the creation and development of brand identity from the perspective of the organisation. Keller's model assumes that brand knowledge already exists on the part of the consumer, whereas, in a high-involvement purchase such as the selection of an MBA service provider, the potential MBA student may possess little, or even no knowledge of the brand during the initial formulation stages of the consideration set.

Furthermore, it is the writer's considered opinion, based on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, that the alignment of brand identity (on the part of an organisation) with the perceived image of the brand (on the part of the consumer), is crucial for building positive customer-based brand equity. It is therefore important for marketers to understand the concept of brand image, and the relative impact that a positive or negative perceived brand image can have on a brand. The research design of this study will therefore focus on the logic of research and the evidence that is required to address the research problem adequately.

In order to accomplish the research objectives, the writer has only selected research components from the Markinor study that are considered relevant to the research problem and the objectives of the study.

3.1 Problem Statement and Hypothesis Formulation

As stated in Chapter 1, the basic premise for the formulation of the hypothesis, is that the perception of a favourable and positive brand image of an MBA service provider, will result in improved customer-based brand equity on the part of a prospective MBA student. The literature review examined in Chapter 2, indicated that brand image is based upon the individual consumer's perception of a brand, and that perception may be influenced by different types of brand associations. These types of brand associations include the perceived attributes, perceived benefits and the consumers' attitude towards a

brand, which is influenced by the favourability, strength and uniqueness of these brand associations.

In keeping with the goal of explaining and controlling the causes of behaviour, a causal hypothesis has been formulated which postulates the causal influence of brand image on the decision-making behaviour of a prospective MBA student. The hypothesis is therefore formulated as follows:

H₀: A favourable and positive brand image will result in improved customer-based brand equity.

H_a: A favourable and positive brand image will not result in improved customer-based brand equity.

The testing of the hypothesis will be based on the information obtained from the Markinor 2001 study that is directly related to the students' motivational reasons for studying towards an MBA. These motivational reasons will then be linked to the criteria used by prospective students when selecting an MBA service provider.

3.2 Background to the Markinor Study

Based on the success of the *Financial Mail* cover story that investigated MBA programmes in South Africa in 2000, the *Financial Mail* re-commissioned Markinor to

provide an annual quantitative report to assess the marketplace for MBA education, and to track changes and developments in this sector.

After the positive feedback from the study conducted in 2000, it was important to achieve a balance between providing comparative and tracking data, as well as assessing new developments in a dynamic environment. The 2001 study, while based on the original 2000 design, and equivalent in terms of methodology and data collection for the purposes of tracking, incorporates information gained by Markinor in the implementation of the benchmark study.

The *Financial Mail* 2001 study, and indeed the 2000 study, are unique among journal surveys on this subject according to Markinor, in that they incorporate the perceptions, opinions and ratings of all relevant stakeholders in the MBA supply chain. In view of the fact that insights and measurements from the institutions themselves, graduates, as well as employers of MBA graduates are incorporated into the report, the survey provides a balanced and holistic view of the relative quality and value of various MBAs, and their service providers.

In past studies on MBAs in other publications, the focus had been placed on the opinions and measurements of employers only, and no attempt had been made to incorporate the views of graduates themselves or course directors from the various schools (Markinor, 2001).

Table 3-1 provides a list of the business schools participating in the study. The “emerging” schools are those from which no students have yet graduated, by virtue of the fact that these schools have not yet been in operation sufficiently long to produce graduates. These schools have been excluded from the sample on this basis, but will form part of the sample in future studies, once the students graduate and penetrate the market.

The list below illustrates the expansion in the number of business schools in operation in South Africa at present, and provides some insight into the increased levels of competition for MBA students and enhanced alternatives available to potential students. Never has the variety of choices in business schools and formats been as wide. The primary reason for this increase is the influx of foreign or international schools offering the MBA degree (Markinor, 2001).

Table 3-1. Participating Schools

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS	
<u>PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS</u>	<u>EMERGING SCHOOLS</u>
<u>LOCAL</u> • University of Stellenbosch • University of Pretoria • Damelin • Milpark Business School • RAU • University of Cape Town (UCT) • WITS Business School • University of Durban Westville • Potchefstroom Business School • Unisa <u>INTERNATIONAL</u> • Business School of The Netherlands • Henley Business School • Herriot-Watt • University of Southern Queensland • De Montfort • Bond University	• Gordon Institute of Business Science • University of The Free State • University of Natal • University of The North • Cape Technikon • Regent College • Management College of SA(MANCOSA) <u>NB</u> Emerging schools are in operation but have no graduates as yet.

Source: Markinor, (2001).

International schools were defined as those offering an MBA qualification in South Africa, which have local operations, but which are affiliated with international academic institutions.

3.2.1 Objectives of the Markinor Study

The overall objective of the Markinor 2001 study was to produce a ranking and corresponding rating of the MBA programmes available in the South African marketplace, and to place this within the context of the 2000 benchmark study, as well as to reflect the changing dynamics of the marketplace.

Furthermore, secondary objectives of the study were:

- To gain a holistic understanding of the MBA marketplace with respect to growth trends, the philosophies of respective institutions, and key challenges which face the market.
- To identify objectives of prospective MBA students in undertaking an MBA, as well as identify motivating factors and selection criteria used by students in choosing a particular service supplier.
- To assess, upon completion of the programme, whether or not these above-mentioned objectives were achieved, and whether or not the criteria in selection were relevant.

- To ascertain and understand perceptions held of MBA schools by students as well as potential and current employers.
- To compare remuneration packages of MBA and non-MBA employees.

3.2.2 Research Design and Research Methodology of Markinor Study

As with the 2000 study, the methodology used by Markinor in the 2001 study involved sampling three sets of role players or stakeholders. As mentioned previously, these groups were defined as senior members of the academic board of the business schools, MBA graduates, and recruitment or human resources personnel (employers) at top South African companies.

The methodology selected at each stage of the study reflected the required in- and outputs necessary for the evolution of the project.

The initial part of the study drew inputs from the business schools themselves, in the form of a self-completion fact sheet, which served to provide a basis for analysis of variables and statistics such as applications, acceptances, enrolments and graduations. The contents of the fact sheets also provided insights into the nature of the relevant MBA course curricula, their duration and structure, course accreditation as well as any academic affiliations that the schools may have.

A diversity of statistical and measurable data was acquired in this way, although less quantifiable hot-buttons, relating to the broader philosophical approach toward the MBA offered by the specific school, and insight into the major challenges facing institutions, were also examined by Markinor.

The business schools provided the universe for the graduate sample themselves, in the form of lists of MBA graduates from the last two years. The semi-structured questionnaire that was used to evaluate graduates' perceptions of the business school, was approved by the institutions themselves and was generated with their input.

The next step involved the evaluation of the perceptions and rankings of potential and current employers of MBA graduates. The companies sampled in the survey were companies that employed MBA graduates and whose recruiters were thus knowledgeable about the various MBA programmes on offer, and could authoritatively comment on the performance and quality of the graduates they had hired. It should be noted that this information has not been included in the current study, as the perceptions and rankings of potential and current employers of MBA graduates does not form part of the problem statement.

In this regard, smaller or emerging schools' concerns about sampling were justified. All previous studies in other publications had used mean score rankings from a random sample of employers, which reflected a greater familiarity with larger, better-established business schools. Owing to the greater number of graduates produced by these schools,

a random sample of employees would be biased towards the schools enjoying the greatest brand awareness.

In addition, the greater absolute number of graduates from these institutions underrepresented the interests of more recent academic additions to the business landscape.

In order to overcome this bias, graduates from each school were asked to provide details of their employers, and these identified individuals, most often the persons responsible for the hiring decision, were used as the basis of the employer sample.

For the purposes of generic analysis a sample size that was too small was boosted by Markinor with a random sample of respondents who satisfied the criterion that they had employed a recent MBA graduate within the past two years. With this time filter in place, a balanced employer viewpoint based on recent experience was produced, rather than an enhanced or diluted longer-term view.

Students of the business schools provided the first ranking, which represents a summary of the collective perceptions of all graduates. The potential bias inherent in a graduate rating his/her own institution more favourably was removed by excluding the ranking accorded by each graduate of his/her own institution from that school's total rating.

Measures were acquired for awareness at a spontaneous and aided level, and a measure of quality was exacted from graduates, using a five-point scale, where one was defined as “poor” and five was defined as “excellent”.

Employers provided the second ranking of the business schools, and again the potential bias relating to the structural issue of differing awareness levels was encountered. Employers were only required to rate schools of which they displayed spontaneous awareness. For several schools this meant that sample sizes were too small to allow accurate conclusions. Once again, as stated above, the employers’ ranking of the business schools was not included in the results of this study, as the research approach has been from the perspective of the individual’s perception of the image of the brand.

In an effort to understand and assess the relative impact or influence a particular motivator has on potential MBA candidates in selection of a business school, correspondence analysis was applied to data to generate perceptual maps. These maps connect the school of choice with a particular set of student aspirations. The same process was applied to the employer sample in order to generate a set of attributes which characterised a particular school, but once again only the student responses have been included in this study.

Where employers or graduates have been asked to rate specific attributes, these attributes have been ranked according to the proportion of votes extended to the highest two-scale items on a five-point labelled scale. This practice is in line with an accepted statistical

method called the “top box” approach, and is a reliable way of eliminating scale biases when quantifying perceptual opinions (Markinor, 2001).

3.2.3 Sample Sizes and Method of Sampling

Base samples consisted of:

- 624 MBA graduates from 1999 or 2000
- 300 employers who had either employed the above-mentioned graduates or who had an existing employee graduate from an MBA programme, while in their employ, in the last two years. The sample for this group was constructed in such a way to allow respondents to rate more than one employee on a particular attribute, affording greater base sizes than the allotted 300 in some cases (489) (Markinor, 2001).

Both sets of interviews were conducted telephonically using Markinor’s CATI (Computer-Assisted Telephonic Interviewing) technique, in the language of the respondent's choice. In general, appointments were set up at times convenient for the respondents and quality control checks were conducted to ensure that the respondents were bona fide MBA graduates. The methodology afforded a semi-structured questionnaire which included measurable and quantifiable data, as well as more exploratory, qualitative insights in the form of open-ended questions, and typically lasted 20 minutes (Markinor, 2001).

A modified version of this questionnaire which lists the questions selected as being relevant to this study is attached as Annexure A.

3.3 Quality of Data Collected

The input of the data sheets that were submitted by each business school to Markinor required them to provide a list of MBA graduates from the years 1999 and 2000. These lists provided the sample universe for the graduate study. Owing to different size structures of various schools, dissimilar response rates, and inconsistent base sizes of lists provided, care was taken by Markinor to achieve as wide and as representative a distribution as possible. Accordingly, it was decided by Markinor not to weight the sample.

Thus the sample design, according to Markinor, was not specifically representative of the corresponding size of each of the participating business schools, but a threshold sub-sample of 60 respondents was used for the largest schools. In this way the base size for each institution was large enough to provide perceptions which were representative at the level of that institution. The total sample represents 39% of the total MBA graduate base for 1999 and 2000, and as such provides a 5% degree of allowable error at a 95% level of confidence (Markinor, 2001).

3.4 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter highlights the research design of the current study, and the formulation of the hypothesis. Furthermore, this chapter describes the direct link with the research design and research methodology as used by Markinor, which has formed the basis for the information used in this study. Chapter 4, which follows, will present the findings of the research conducted by Markinor, and an interpretation of these research findings by the writer, as appropriate to the problem statement and hypothesis formulated in this study.

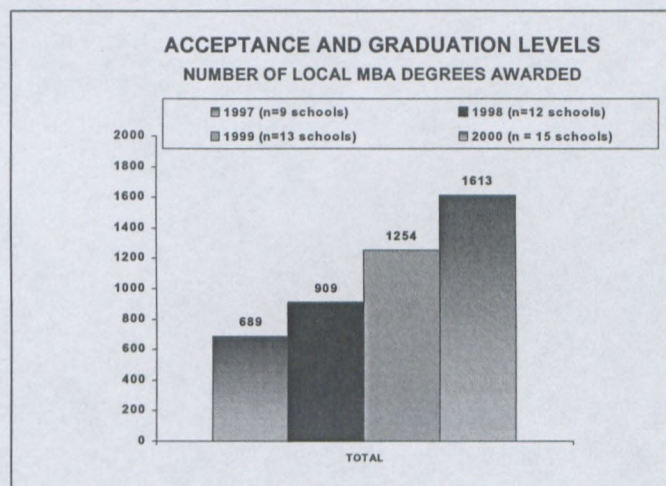
Chapter 4: Research Results

4.1 Introduction

The Markinor 2001 Survey provides a comprehensive research analysis of the entire MBA market in South Africa, which includes the Academic Institutions, opinions of Management from organisations and the MBA Graduates. The focus of his study will concentrate on the perceptions of the graduate MBA students.

4.2 Results of the Markinor 2001 Survey

Table 4-1. Acceptance and Graduation Levels



Source: Markinor (2001).

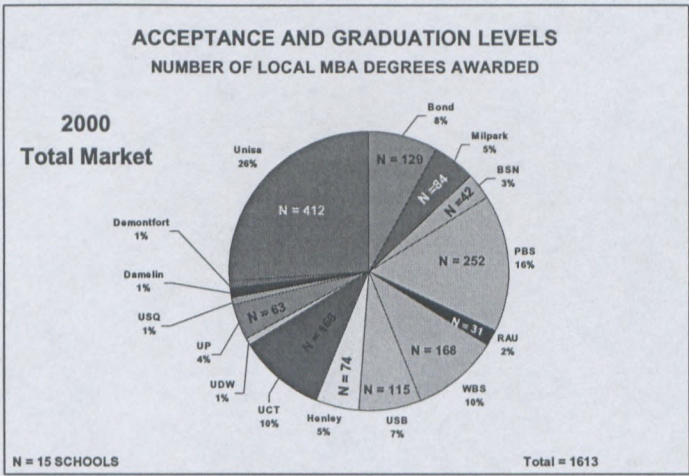
According to the Markinor 2001 survey, the growth in MBA graduates is organic in terms of the local South African market, with schools like Wits Business School more than doubling the number of graduates produced. In addition, Unisa produced 50% more graduates than it did in 1999, and the University of Stellenbosch maintained a consistent

measure of graduates produced, which had increased by 55% from 1998 to 1999 (Markinor, 2001).

The total market was bolstered by expansion in numbers of MBAs awarded at international schools, most notably, Bond University, which produced 129 MBA graduates in 2000, and Henley, which awarded 74 MBA degrees.

The following graph indicates the proportion of MBAs awarded at each of the participating schools in the Markinor Survey in 2001:

Table 4-2. Acceptance and Graduation Levels



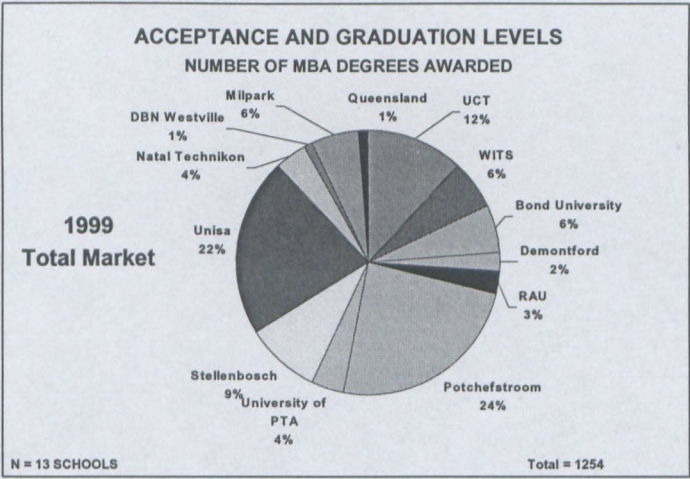
Source: Markinor (2001).

Trends with regard to market share indicate the re-emergence of Unisa as the most prolific provider of MBA degrees in 2000 with 412 degrees awarded, a portion of some 26% of the total market. This represents an increase of 50% of an already large student base, when compared to last year's figure of 275.

The telemetric MBA degree programme available from Potchefstroom University, which was the largest single supplier last year, reduced the number of degrees awarded in 2000 by 17% from 300 to 250, with a 2000 share of market of 16% versus 24% last year. University of Cape Town and Wits Business School awarded an identical number of MBAs in 2000, with 168 each, with a combined share of market of 20% (Markinor, 2001).

The influx of foreign entrants in recent years has increased the level of competition in the South African marketplace, and the choice of MBA programmes and service providers available to potential candidates, is increasingly varied.

Table 4-3. Acceptance and Graduation Levels



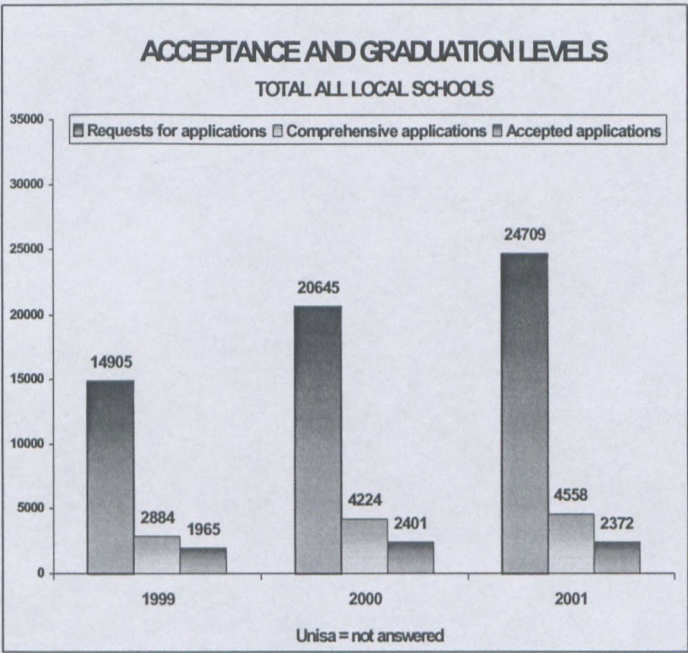
Source: Markinor (2001).

4.2.1 Application and Acceptance Levels

Application levels provide an excellent indicator of interest in MBA programmes in general. The levels of acceptance provide an indication of the levels of new entrants into the marketplace over the following three-year rolling period.

Table 4-4 provides an insight into the interest expressed by potential MBA candidates at a total market level.

Table 4-4. Acceptance and Graduation Levels



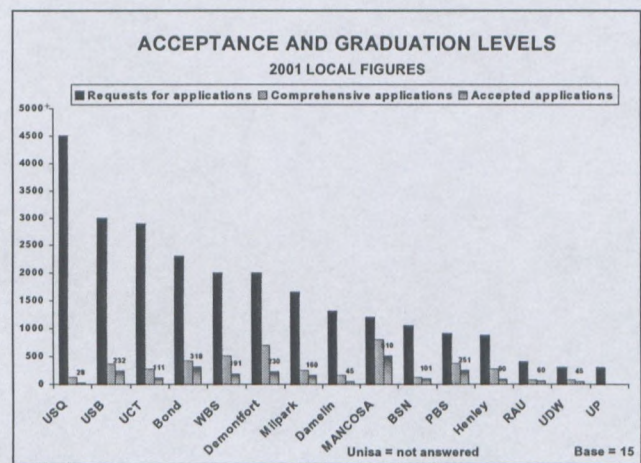
Source: Markinor (2001).

Table 4-4 shows the collated information for all business schools over the past three years and it should be noted that request for applications, as well as comprehensive applications would be duplicated across all schools. Table 4-4 demonstrates a continuing increased interest in MBA education, with the year on year growth in requests for applications increasing by 23% from 1999 to 2000 (Markinor, 2001).

Despite this increased interest, the Markinor Survey reveals that fewer candidate applications were favourable in 2001, with only 2372 applications accepted by the business schools. A possible reason for this decline is improved screening of applicants through more rigorous entrance examinations and more comprehensive suitability testing, a phenomenon which will be explored in further detail below.

Table 4-5 provides a breakdown per business school, and helps to provide the relative scale of the size of the international schools.

Table 4-5. Acceptance and Graduation Levels

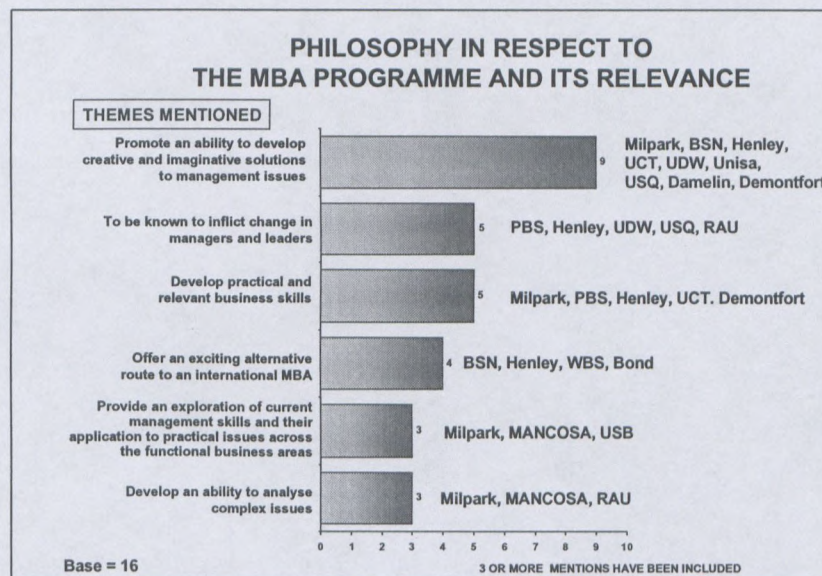


Source: Markinor (2001).

4.2.2 MBA Institutions and Business School Philosophies

Each of the participating schools was required by Markinor to provide a synopsis of the general philosophical stance with which their institution approaches the MBA degree. A method of content analysis provided some understanding of the common themes and issues the schools face in structuring and implementing their MBA programmes.

Table 4-6. Philosophy of Business Schools



Source: Markinor (2001).

The most prominent focus of schools in this regard is to develop individuals who are solutions-oriented, who can think imaginatively and creatively in relation to business challenges, and are capable of acting as facilitators of change, and assume roles as leaders in the management process. This “systems-busting” focus is a new development in terms of emphasis, and hints towards a reduced trend towards the more conservative, business-

skills focussed orientation, which has traditionally dominated this environment (Markinor, 2001).

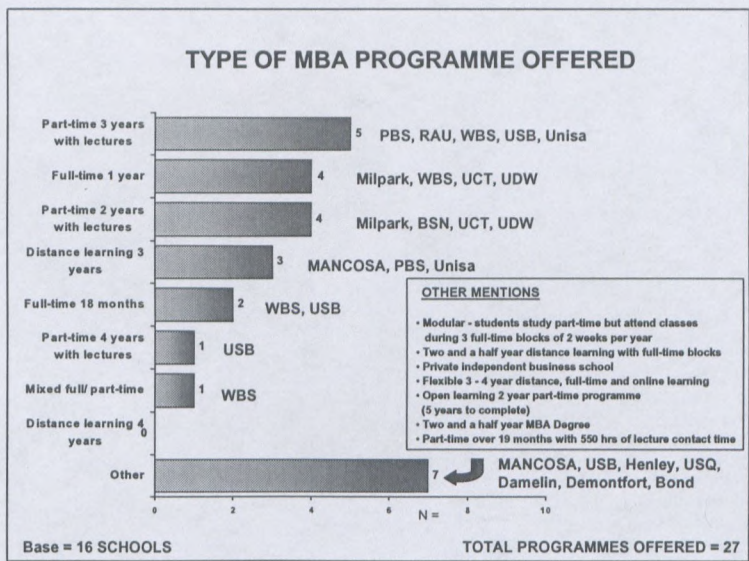
An important goal of many business schools is to refine existing leadership qualities, although not at the expense of practical and outcomes-based skill development, which despite an emerging tendency of placing an accent on cultivating effective thinking styles still remains a core, though less distinct objective of MBA education. (Markinor, 2001).

4.2.3 Type and Nature of the MBA Programme

Never before in South Africa has the choice of MBA formats been as varied. Potential MBA students enjoy the luxury of numerous flexible and tailored service offerings, ranging from the traditional three-year, part-time or one-year, full-time models, to an assortment of transformations in the nature and content of courses offered.

Table 4-7 demonstrates the various alternatives available to students undertaking MBAs in South Africa today:

Table 4.7. Type of MBA Programme Offered



Source: Markinor (2001).

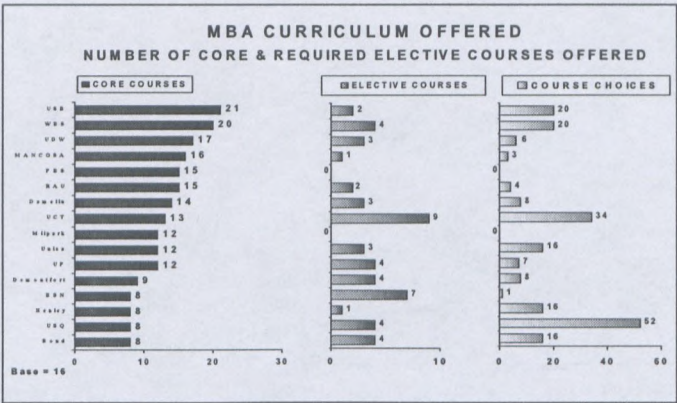
The choices available to potential MBA students provide numerous personalised options to suit a number of differing objectives, agendas and budgets. The complexity of comparison is exacerbated by the proliferation of these different formats, and comparisons between types of programmes would be subjective and inappropriate. An interesting alternative in evaluating format types is to assess the number of contact hours and in-class experience offered by each institution.

4.2.4 Curriculums

Although mention has been made of the extensiveness of alternative structures and formats of MBA programmes, the general configuration of MBA programmes includes a core course element, a number of elective courses, and some form of research requirement.

As Table 4-8 below indicates, each of the business schools has a different approach to the manner in which its respective curriculum are structured:

Table 4-8. MBA Curriculum Offered



Source: Markinor (2001).

Wits and Stellenbosch retain the position of having the highest number of core courses, while UCT still offers the most flexible approach to modelling the MBA between core and elective courses, and provides a high number of alternatives from which to select elective modules. The University of Southern Queensland provides the maximum choice for elective courses, with 52 options available to students. Only Potchefstroom and Milpark offer a core course programme, with no elective choices. Research requirements vary from a master’s-level taught dissertation, to a company-specific case study, or a structured business plan, a 15000 word compulsory dissertation, and a research proposal of 1 000 words.

The advent of international schools to the marketplace, coupled with a growing trend towards globalisation of business and cultural/academic environments, are reflected in the following chart, which identifies those institutions with a specifically global focus to the structure, content and implementation of their MBA programmes.

This climate of amplified competition creates the need for constant innovation, and the need to update course material in such a way that it reflects the dynamism of the changing field of business management. Of course, this is no indicator of the value or quality of the original or additional modules, but serves as a reference to levels of flexibility and adaptability on the part of the schools. In addition, it was found that all schools had revised, updated or restructured their MBA programmes on average, within the last two years. The most recent of these are the University of Pretoria and University of Southern Queensland, which updated their MBA in 2001 (Markinor, 2001).

4.2.5 Cost Implications

The increased number of schools offering MBA programmes in South Africa, and corresponding heightened competition, would seem to suggest keener price sensitivity among potential students. In this market, however, price is often a perceived differentiator on the basis of quality, which may or may not be the case in reality. Despite increased supply, fees for MBAs increased an average of 16% from 1999, with only three schools, MANCOSA, Business School of the Netherlands and the University of Southern Queensland, not raising their fees.

Henley, Wits Business School and University of Southern Queensland present the most expensive alternatives, in excess of R60 000, and RAU, MANCOSA and Unisa offer the cheapest programmes at around R25 000. In an attempt to accurately reflect the true cost incurred, schools were asked to include details of any voluntary costs.

4.2.6 Major Challenges

In the light of rapid category growth, a more and more cluttered market, and a dynamic environment, business schools were asked to detail their perceptions of the challenges facing the industry as a whole, and their school in particular. Content analysis was used to distil these themes into categories (Markinor , 2001).

In 1999, the primary challenges facing schools were prioritised by the business schools as:

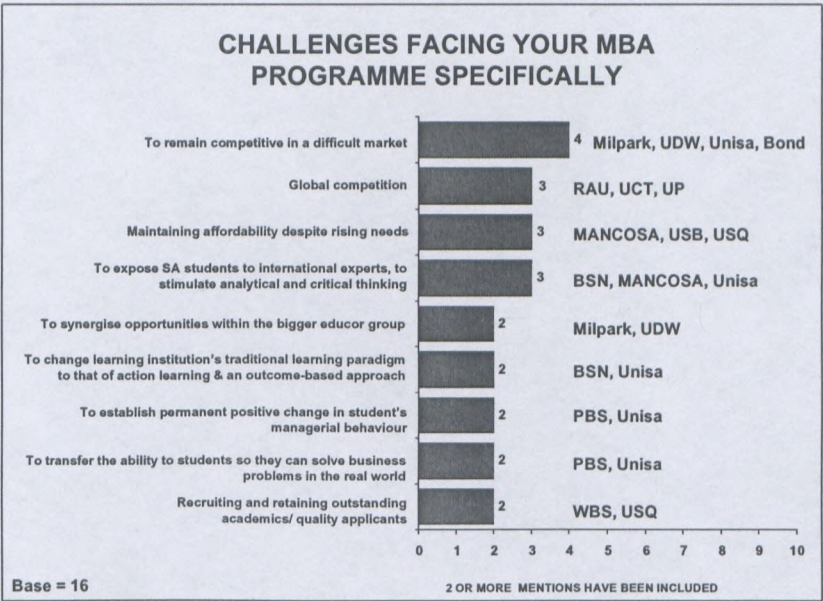
- ❑ foreign competitors flooding the market with low-quality;
 - ❑ non-reputable programmes;
 - ❑ the formidable task of providing a truly global focus;
 - ❑ a corresponding need for innovation;
 - ❑ the need to remain in touch with technology as a driver of business
- (Markinor, 2001).

In 2000, the emphasis has changed somewhat. In general, the highest priority was given to ensuring that MBA students are properly and appropriately equipped with practical and relevant skills.

Global competition, and the need for adaptability and flexibility to answer the call to accommodate South Africa's unfolding environment, rounded out the general issues in the minds of business school leaders in shaping strategies for the future. When asked

what the challenges facing their particular school were, the academic leaders responded as follows:

Table 4.9. Challenges facing your MBA Programme Specifically



Source: Markinor (2001).

Here again, the difficulty of remaining competitive in the market was highlighted by the Markinor Survey, as was the effect on the market of global competitors. The dilemma of sustaining affordability in the context of heightened expectations was featured, as was the necessity to internationalise South African students, and to develop and stimulate analytical and critical thinking.

4.3 Graduate Opinions and Perceptions

The Markinor 2001 survey differed from its previous surveys by including not only the opinions and measurement of employers, but also the views of the graduates themselves, thereby adding an important new dimension to the survey (Markinor, 2001).

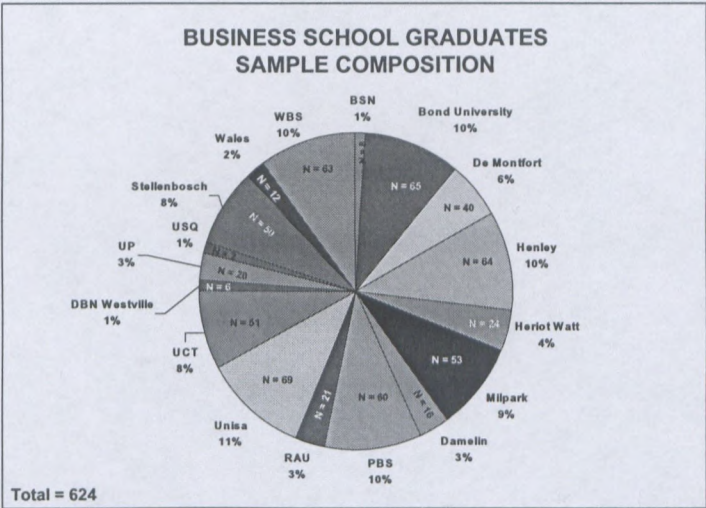
4.3.1 Profile of Respondents

The input of the data sheets that were submitted by each business school to Markinor, required them to provide a list of MBA graduates from 1999 and 2000. These lists provided the sample universe for the graduate study. Owing to different size structures of various schools, dissimilar response rates, and inconsistent base sizes of lists provided, care was taken to achieve as wide and as representative a distribution as possible. Accordingly, it was decided by Markinor not to weight the sample.

Thus the sample design was not specifically representative of the corresponding size of each of the participating schools, but a threshold sub-sample size of 60 respondents was used for the largest schools. In this way the base size for each institution was large enough to provide perceptions which were representative at the level of that institution. The total sample represents 39% of the total MBA graduate base for 1999 and 2000, and as such provides a 5% degree of allowable error at a 95% level of confidence (Markinor, 2001).

Table 4-10 which follows provides a breakdown of the graduate-sample by business school attended:

Table 4-10. Sample Composition of Business Schools



Source: Markinor (2001).

Of all MBA degrees awarded in South Africa in 1999/2000, local schools awarded 82%, and international schools awarded 18% (Markinor, 2001).

In order to assess in detail the differences in perceptions (if any) between local and international graduates of their respective schools, the Markinor sample design highlighted the importance placed on gaining perceptions from graduates of both local and international schools.

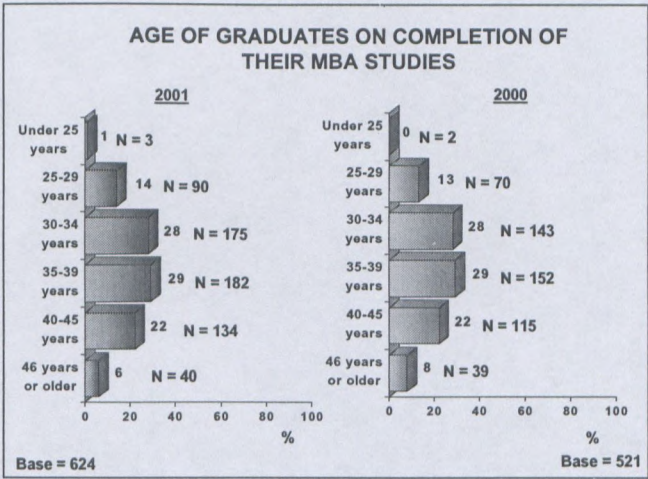
The classification of schools into local and international was carried out on the basis of the origin of the school’s teaching programme as opposed to geographic location.

A very strong bias towards male graduates persists in the Markinor 2001 data, as compared to the 2000 data, although the proportion of male to female graduates has declined. In 1999, according to Markinor, only fourteen out of every hundred graduates sampled were female. This year, by comparison, the ratio of male to female graduates

indicates an increase of female MBA graduates, stated as 20% of the total sample (Markinor, 2001).

The survey results suggest that South African MBA graduates are on average older than their American counterparts, and accordingly the distribution of graduates according to age remains biased in favour of adults over the age of 35 (Markinor, 2001). Furthermore, 57% of the sample are 35 years and older upon completion of the programme. These figures resemble the measures for 1999, according to Markinor, where 59% of the sample were older than 35 years old. In 2000, 15% of the sample were younger than thirty years when they graduated, versus 13% in 1999. In the USA, the mean ages for MBA graduates vary according to sources from between 25 years and 28 years old (Markinor, 2001).

Table 4.11. Age of Graduates on Completion of their MBA Studies



Source: Markinor (2001).

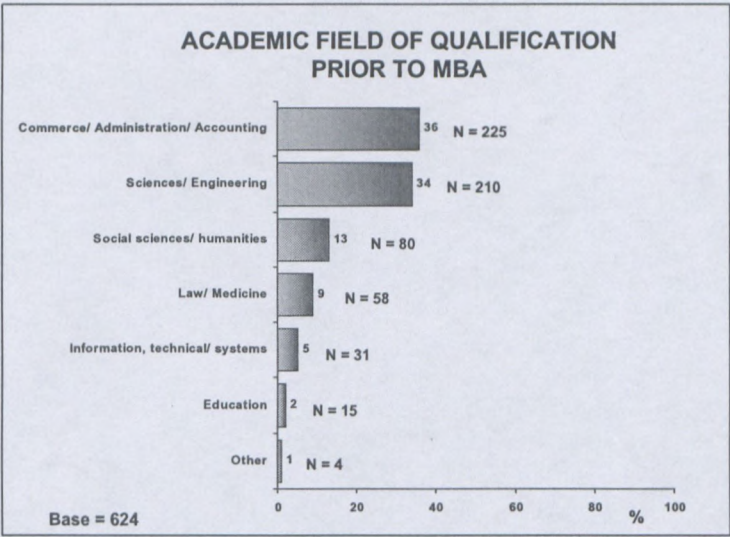
Thus the media-generated image of MBA graduates, as young, dynamic and ruthlessly ambitious singles is not supported by the data according to the Markinor survey. South African MBA graduates, according to Markinor, perhaps in contrast to their USA counterparts, are more mature, established married individuals with families.

Balancing career, studies and family commitments require a need for flexibility and personalisation of the MBA programme. Given the expense of the MBA degree, the amount of time required for reading, case studies, lectures and syndicate groups, the majority of graduates completed their programmes on a part-time basis. Sixty-five per cent of the sample had completed their course over a two-, three-, or four-year, part-time period. Only 10% of the sample completed a full-time alternative MBA programme, reflecting the benefits of being able to spread the studies over a manageable period, in the context of full-time employment (Markinor, 2001).

In spite of the stated minimum entrance requirements of the schools for a minimum academic qualification of a bachelor's degree, some 15% of the sample had other post-matric qualifications. 20% of graduates from international schools had only a national higher diploma prior to starting an MBA programme, versus the 3% of graduates from local schools. This would seem to indicate a more flexible approach in accepting students, predominantly from previously disadvantaged groups and those without formal university degrees.

The majority of candidates graduating with MBA degrees in 2000 had previous academic experience in the fields of commerce, administration, accounting, as well as the sciences and engineering. As Table 4-12 demonstrates, about one in three successful MBA graduates is from one each of these two academic backgrounds.

Table 4.12. Academic Field of Qualification prior to MBA



Source: Markinor (2001).

If the level of detail of this analysis is enhanced, the relative distribution of academic areas of qualification prior to MBA programme commencement indicates several interesting trends according to Markinor. Engineers are most likely to graduate with MBAs from UCT, Wits Business School, University of Stellenbosch and University of Pretoria. Scientists are most likely to graduate with MBAs from Unisa or Stellenbosch, whereas graduates with prior experience in the social sciences are more likely to graduate from the University of Pretoria, RAU or De Montfort University.

Accountants graduating from MBA programmes are most likely to do so from the University of Pretoria or Milpark, and lawyers are most likely to graduate from De Montfort University or Potchefstroom Business School. RAU, Herriot-Watt and Bond are most likely to produce MBA graduates from the field of commerce (Markinor, 2001).

In terms of the profile of graduates from each school, as Table 4-13 indicates, WBS, UCT, USB, Henley and Unisa tend to produce proportionately more MBA's with engineering and commercial backgrounds, a trend that is reflected in the total sample.

Table 4.13. Academic Field of Qualification prior to MBA (cont.)

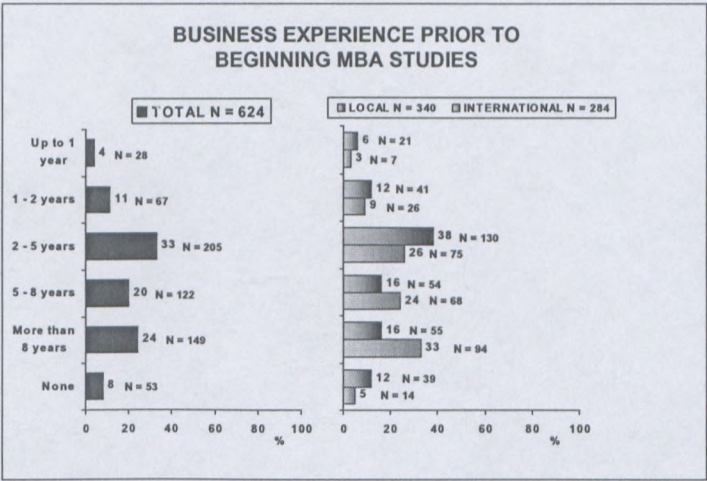
ACADEMIC FIELD OF QUALIFICATION PRIOR TO MBA (cont.)																
	Bond	Demont fort	Henley	Heriot Watt	Milpark	PBS	RAU	Unisa	UCT	UP	USB	WBS	Other	Local	Internati onal	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Sciences	7.7	12.5	7.8	0.0	11.3	13.3	14.3	21.7	11.8	5.0	16.0	11.1	9.1	14.7	8.1	
Engineering	15.4	7.5	25.0	29.2	5.7	13.3	9.5	21.7	37.3	30.0	30.0	39.7	18.2	27.1	15.8	
Social sciences	18.5	22.5	6.3	12.5	13.2	18.3	28.6	2.9	11.8	30.0	8.0	9.5	9.1	12.1	13.7	
Medicine	7.7	15.0	1.6	4.2	11.3	6.7	4.8	0.0	9.8	0.0	10.0	7.9	6.8	6.2	7.4	
Education	1.5	0.0	3.1	4.2	7.5	3.3	0.0	4.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	2.3	1.8	3.2	
Administration	0.0	5.0	4.7	4.2	5.7	5.0	4.8	1.4	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.6	2.1	4.9	
Accounting	4.6	12.5	14.1	8.3	13.2	13.3	4.8	13.0	0.0	20.0	4.0	3.2	6.8	7.6	10.2	
Commerce	27.7	20.0	29.7	33.3	26.4	18.3	33.3	23.2	17.6	10.0	28.0	15.9	29.5	20.3	28.2	
Law	3.1	5.0	4.7	4.2	1.9	5.0	0.0	1.4	3.9	0.0	0.0	4.8	0.0	2.6	2.5	
Information/ technical systems	10.8	0.0	1.6	0.0	3.8	3.3	0.0	8.7	5.9	5.0	4.0	4.8	4.5	5.0	4.9	
Other	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.6	0.7	
Base = 624																

Source: Markinor (2001).

As would be expected with the age distribution of the sample, 44% of respondents had more than five years' business experience prior to starting their MBA degrees. This figure is a significant decline in the experience of graduates in the previous study. In 1999, 74% of the respondents had a minimum of five years' work experience.

Interestingly, international schools account for proportionately more of the most experienced graduates, as is authenticated in table 4-14.

Table 4.14. Business experience prior to beginning MBA Studies



Source: Markinor (2001).

The MBA degree is recognised as a motivator of both career change, and, increasingly, entrepreneurship. Respondents were asked by Markinor to detail the industry that they worked in before commencing their MBA degrees, and the industry in which they are currently employed. After completion of the MBA degree, 19% of graduates sampled had begun their own business. This figure is a 5% increase on the measure in 1999, and indicates a penetration of skills into the market, and an increase in entrepreneurial vision and leadership.

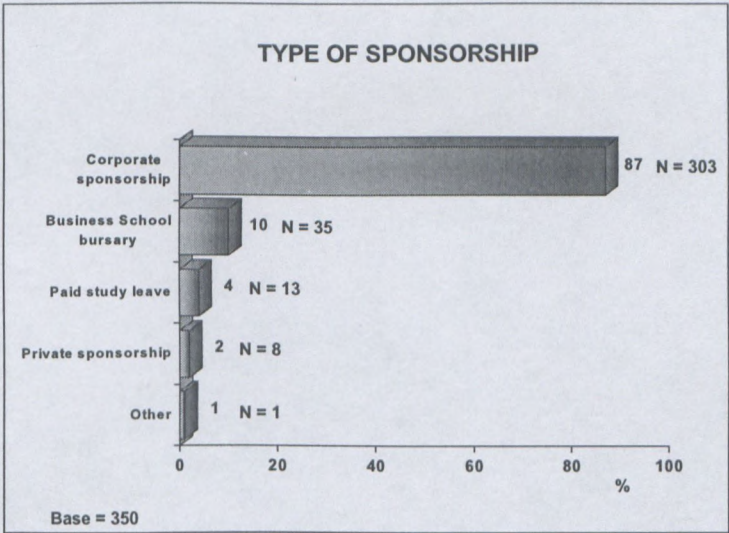
The sectors into which proportionately more MBA graduates penetrated, and those which demonstrated the most growth in terms of absolute numbers of MBA graduates

employed, were financial services, management consulting, information technology and marketing services. The sector from which graduates departed most significantly was manufacturing.

4.3.2 Corporate Sponsorship

More than half of respondents (56%) received some form of sponsorship towards their MBA degrees. The following graphs provide a breakdown of the types of sponsorship that graduates received, as well as the proportion of graduates per institution that enjoyed sponsorship:

Table 4.15. Type of Sponsorship



Source: Markinor, (2001).

Despite the reluctance of corporate employers to sponsor MBA degrees, due to the perception that graduates are more likely to change jobs after completing their degrees,

employers provided some 87% of sponsorship. 62% of graduates sponsored in this way are still employed by their sponsoring firm, and the remaining 38% have moved on.

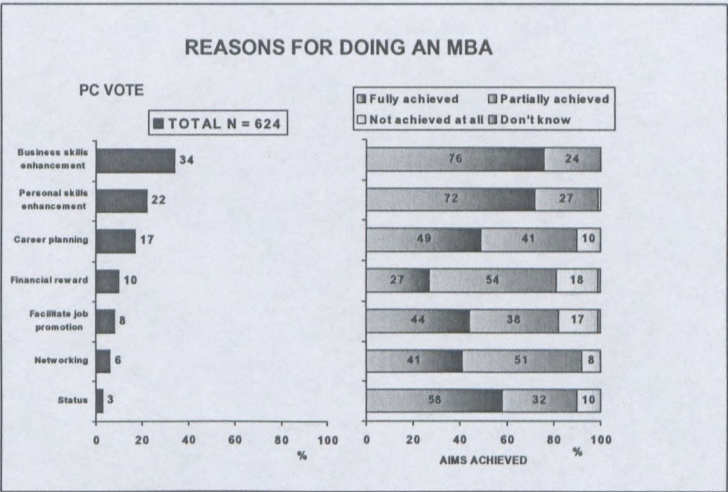
In stark contrast to last year the universities which produce graduates with MBA's, which are most likely to defect from sponsoring corporates are Wits Business School and UCT. Local school graduates more likely to change jobs upon completion of their degrees than those are from international schools.

4.3.3 Motivational Reasons for doing an MBA

A pilot study conducted by Markinor generated categories of reasons why prospective students wished to complete the degree. These categories were then accommodated into the main study. It must be noted that respondents were offered alternatives to these pre-emptive categories, and were given scope to mention other reasons or motivating factors. The percentage scores in the table represent the proportion of students who used the top-two scale items to express their opinion on the importance of that reason for contemplating an MBA degree.

Overall, business and personal skills enhancement were rated as the two primary motivating factors, with 34% and 22% respective mentions. 76% of graduates believed they had fully achieved the goal of improving business skills, and 72% believed their personal skills were similarly improved upon completion of the degree. Career planning, which was defined as the ability to use an MBA to change careers or to change the nature of their job in the same industry was also highly rated by respondents.

Table 4.16. Reasons for doing a MBA



Source: Markinor, (2001).

The distribution of motivating factors was similar across the total sample, although the relative importance of each variable was slightly different at each institution.

Correspondence analysis was used to explore further whether respondents with specific reasons for doing an MBA could be linked to specific business schools. This technique is an accepted statistical practice, which identifies significantly higher, or lower levels of association between sub-samples of the total sample, than for the average association with the total sample. This analysis helps to build a character set of the kind of MBA candidates who chose each school to do their degree. Also, the degree of success of achievement of these motivators is examined per school in the tables below.

In Table 4-17, a plus or minus sign indicates a stronger or weaker level of association of that business school with a particular brand attribute when compared against the total sample. Care should be exercised when interpreting the findings on the below tables.

The absence of a sign (either positive or negative) does not imply that respondents for that school were not motivated by that reason. It means that respondents from that particular school had levels of association with that brand attribute that differed very little (or not at all) from the total sample.

Table 4.17. Correspondence Analysis

CORRESPONDENCE ANALYSIS - REASONS FOR DOING AN MBA -												
	Bond	De Montfort	Henley	Heriot Watt	Milpark	PBS	RAU	Unisa	UCT	UP	Stellenbosch	WBS
1. Financial reward					+	-	-		+		-	
2. Status												
3. Business skill enhancement		-			+	+						
4. Personal skills enhancement							+	-	-		+	
5. Networking		+		-					+			
6. Facilitate job promotion				+						-		
7. Career planning					-			+		+	-	

+ or - Indicates a significantly higher or lower level of association than the average amount for the total sample

Source: Markinor, (2001).

4.3.4 Brand Attribute Criteria used for Choosing Schools

The previous section investigated the motivational factors MBA candidates expressed as reasons for their decisions to undertake the MBA degree. The scales of success of these objectives have also been highlighted above. It is important to understand what factors played a role in candidates selecting a particular school. As in the previous scenario, certain brand attributes were piloted as potential reasons for school choice, and no

significant brand attributes emerged in the pilot study. Table 4-18 indicates the brand attributes that were used in the 2001 Markinor Survey, and the top two box score importance attached to these brand attributes by the respondents.

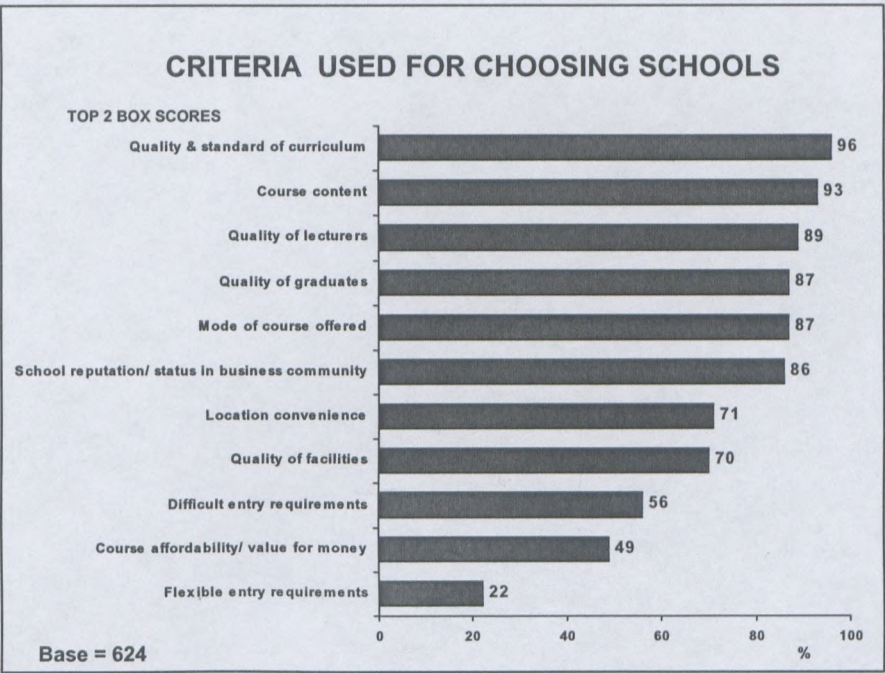
Table 4.18. Correspondence Analysis

CORRESPONDENCE ANALYSIS - CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING SCHOOL -												
	Bond	De Montfort	Henley	Heriot Watt	Milpark	PBS	RAU	Unisa	UCT	UP	Stellenbosch	WBS
1. Quality & standard of curriculum			+	+						-		
2. Quality of lectures				-								
3. Quality of facilities		-	-	-							+	
4. Quality of graduates							-		+			
5 Course affordability					+	+	+	+	-		-	-
6 Location convenience			-				+		-	+		
7. School reputation			+	+	-	-						
8. Easy entry requirements	-	+			+	+		-	-	-	-	-
9. Difficult entry requirements				-			-		+	+		+
10. Mode of course offered				+								
11. Course content			+									

+ or - Indicates a significantly higher or lower level of association than the average number for the total sample

Source: Markinor, (2001).

Table 4.19.



Source: Markinor, (2001).

In 1999, according to Markinor, the format and type of course offered was the primary reason for selecting a particular school, reflecting the markets’ increasing need for flexible solutions. The actual course content, reputation of the school, and associated status as well as the qualities of the lecturers were the next most noted responses. In 2000, the quality and standard of the curriculum was mentioned by 96% of respondents, and was closely followed by the actual content of the courses at 95% (Markinor, 2001).

In contrast with 1999, the mode of course offered was placed fifth in order of priority versus first last year. The quality of lecturers was accorded similar importance with last year’s results. In equivalence with 1999, despite rising costs, affordability was not

accorded much significance, probably due to the high proportion of candidates receiving corporate sponsorship of their course of studies.

Correspondence analysis was again used to determine whether students who chose different schools had contrasting reasons for selecting that particular institution.

Table 4-20. Correspondence Analysis

CORRESPONDENCE ANALYSIS - CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING SCHOOL -												
	Bond	De Montfort	Henley	Heriot Watt	Milpark	PBS	RAU	Unisa	UCT	UP	Stellenbosch	WBS
1. Quality & standard of curriculum			+	+						-		
2. Quality of lectures				-								
3. Quality of facilities		-	-	-							+	
4. Quality of graduates							-		+			
5 Course affordability					+	+	+	+	-		-	-
6 Location convenience			-				+		-	+		
7. School reputation			+	+	-	-						
8. Easy entry requirements	-	+			+	+		-	-	-	-	-
9. Difficult entry requirements				-			-		+	+		+
10. Mode of course offered				+								
11. Course content			+									
+ or - Indicates a significantly higher or lower level of association than the average number for the total sample												

Source: Markinor, (2001).

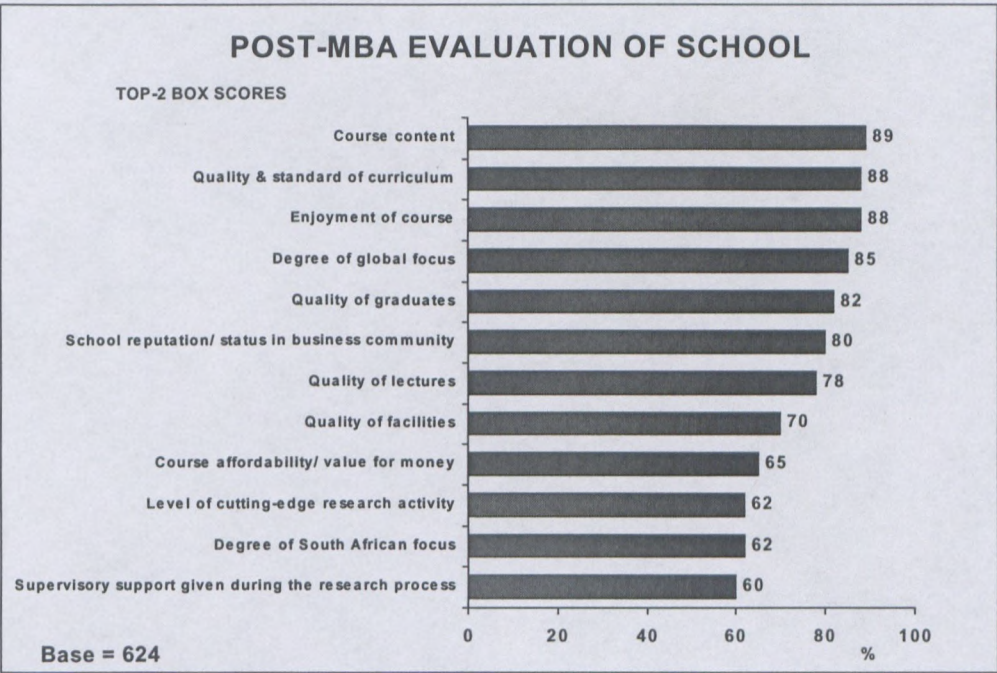
Students who selected Milpark, PBS, RAU, and Unisa, for example, were strongly motivated by affordability, in contrast with UCT, WBS and Stellenbosch. The table can also be interpreted per school; for example, Potchefstroom University is likely to attract students who were motivated by affordability, and relative ease of entry requirements. Herriot-Watt is most likely to attract students motivated by the requirements for quality

of curriculum, as well as positive school reputation and the flexibility of the mode of implementation.

4.3.5 Post-Graduation Business School Evaluation

Graduates were then asked to evaluate the schools from which they had graduated in terms of various rating criteria. 89% of respondents believed the course content had been either excellent or very good, and 88% believed the standard and quality of the curriculum was similarly excellent or very good.

Table 4-21. Post-MBA Evaluation of School



Source: Markinor (2001).

The potential bias of a graduate rating his or her own school more favourably was ameliorated by the use of correspondence analysis, which helps to identify differences

across the sample. Also in the total sample ranking and rating of schools, graduates from that school were excluded from the total sample.

In this way, it can be stated that upon completion of the degree, graduates from Milpark, PBS, RAU, and Unisa perceived and rated the South African focus of these respective MBA's to be higher than that of the total sample. Similarly UCT graduates perceived that the status of their school was higher than the average perception graduates from other schools had of their own school.

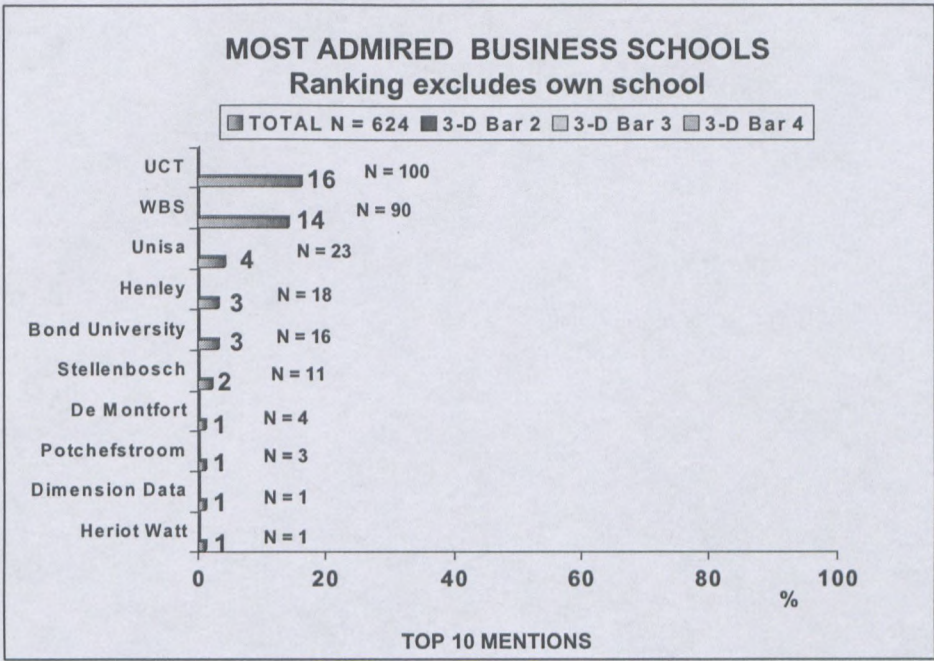
Potchefstroom University, De Montfort University, Herriot-Watt and Bond University are most likely to produce the entrepreneurial leaders of tomorrow, according to the intentions of graduates, although in practice, the University of Pretoria, Bond University and Henley have produced graduates who have become involved in their own business enterprises. On the whole, graduates from the international schools have higher entrepreneurial intentions than graduates from local schools.

In congruence with last year, the potential areas for launching these self-employment ventures for MBA graduates are management consulting, financial services, information technology and marketing services and consulting. These figures differ very slightly from last year's and in many ways are identical.

4.3.6 Most Admired Schools among Graduates

Graduates were asked which business school they most admired. Once again, the potential for sample bias is high, and graduates ratings of their own schools were excluded from the rating of that school by the total sample. In identical order to last year's placing, UCT, Wits and Unisa were awarded the top three positions. Henley, Bond, Stellenbosch, De Montfort, Potchefstroom, Dimension Data and Herriot-Watt round out the top ten tables of schools' ranking.

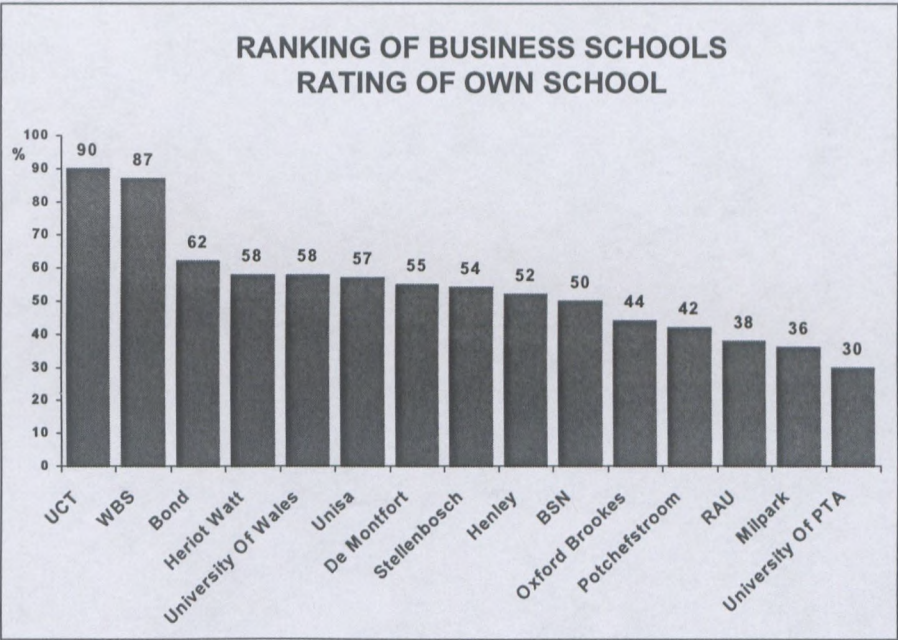
Table 4-22. Most Admired Business Schools



Source: Markinor (2001)

Students' perceptions of their own school were then analysed. Table 4-23 indicates the proportion of each school's graduate body that admires its own school the most.

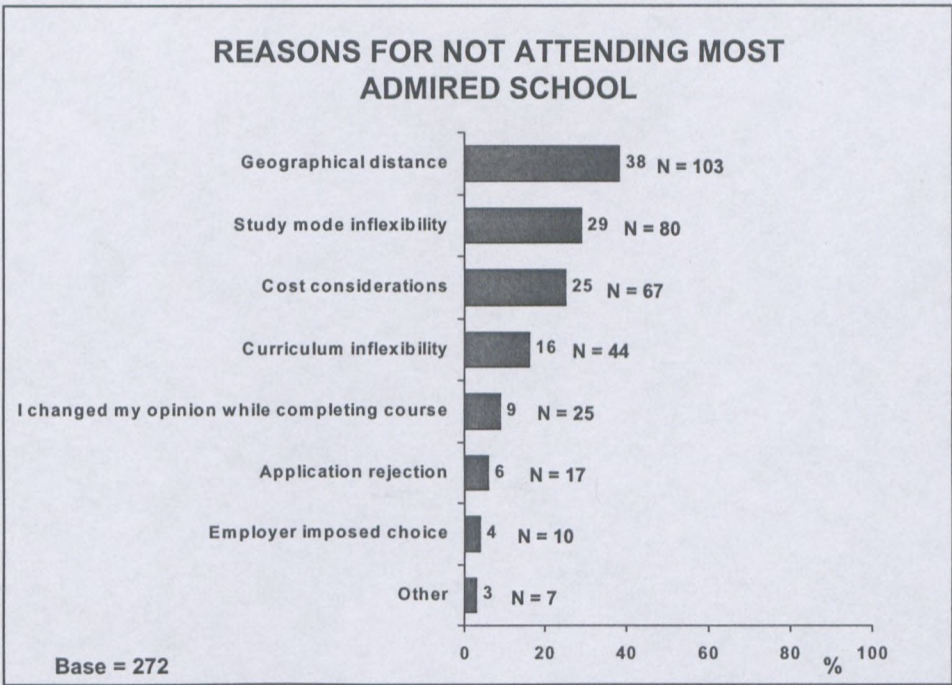
Table 4-23. Rating of Own School



Source: Markinor (2001).

UCT edges out and replaces WBS in first place in graduates’ rankings of their own schools this year, a reversal of last year's top two places. A substantial gap exists after these two schools, after which the most prominent schools were Bond, De Montfort, Herriot-Watt, University of Wales, Unisa and University of Stellenbosch. Milpark and University of Pretoria graduates felt the least positive towards the quality of their schools in this regard.

Table 4-24. Reasons for not attending the Most Admired School



Source: Markinor, (2001).

4.3.7 Graduates’ Schools Ranking

Finally, students were asked to award points, and thus rank each of the business schools participating in the sample, based on their overall perception and impression of that business school. As there were many schools participating in the sample, graduates were first filtered using brand awareness levels. Any graduate who was not aware of a particular business school was not permitted to rate that business school.

Measures were awarded by Markinor at both a spontaneous and a prompted level. In contrast to 2000, differences emerged between ratings given to schools on a spontaneous and at an aided level. The Markinor findings revealed that MBA graduates are learning

how to manipulate their methodologies. As a result, only spontaneous measures were used for analyses (Markinor, 2001).

At the spontaneous level, the top five schools were ranked as follows: UCT, WBS, Business School of the Netherlands, De Montfort University and the University of Stellenbosch. At an aided level, the top two ranking were reversed, with WBS edging out UCT. A significant gap exists between the two top rated institutions at a prompted level which are followed by Unisa, Stellenbosch and Business School of the Netherlands (Markinor, 2001).

4.4 Analysis of the Markinor Research Results

The initial pilot study conducted by Markinor regarding the reasons for doing an MBA generated categories of reasons why prospective students wanted to complete the degree. As stated previously, these categories were then accommodated incorporated in the main study by Markinor. These reasons were highlighted in Table 4-17, and it is interesting to note that business skills' enhancement and personal skills' enhancement account for 56% of the reasons for doing an MBA.

Markinor used correspondence analysis to explore further whether respondents with specific reasons for doing an MBA could be linked to specific business schools. According to Markinor, this analysis helps to build a character set of the kind of MBA candidates who choose each business school to do their degree. These reasons are

directly linked to the perception of the brand image of the business schools in the consideration set of the potential candidates, and their perception of the ability of the various brands to fulfil their needs.

Certain brand attributes were piloted by Markinor as potential reasons for business school choice, and once again no significant brand attributes emerged in the pilot study. Table 4-18, illustrates the brand attributes that were used by Markinor in their 2001 survey, and the top two box score importance attached to them by the respondents. Table 4-19 is extremely important for the purposes of this study as it indicates the perception of the brand (i.e., the brand image), by potential MBA students. Potchefstroom University is therefore likely to attract students based on its brand image, who are motivated by affordability and relative ease of entry requirements, while Herriot Watt is most likely to attract students motivated by the requirements for quality of curriculum, as well as positive school reputation and the flexibility of the mode of implementation (Markinor, 2001).

4.5 Comparison of the Markinor Survey Research Results with the Hypothesis

The hypothesis formulated in Chapter 3 postulates that a favourable and positive brand image will result in improved customer-based brand equity. Brand image is defined as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory (Keller, 1993). Brand associations are the other informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory and contain the meaning of the brand for consumers. The favourability, strength, and uniqueness of these brand associations are the dimensions

distinguishing brand knowledge that play an important role in determining the differential response that makes up brand equity (Keller, 1993).

Brand awareness is the first dimension distinguishing brand knowledge, and is reflected in the consumers' ability to identify the brand under different conditions. Therefore, brand awareness is the first essential that must be established in order to create visibility and build knowledge of the brand.

Customer-based brand equity is defined as the differential effect of this brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand (Keller, 1993). Consumer response to marketing is defined in terms of consumer perceptions, preferences, and behaviour arising from marketing mix activity (e.g., brand choice, comprehension of advertising communication, reactions to perceptions of the brand value proposition).

The selection of an MBA programme, and in particular a specific MBA service provider, is a high-involvement process that requires much time and research effort by a prospective MBA student prior to making the final decision. The research conducted by Markinor clearly indicates the relationship between brand image and customer-based brand equity. Furthermore, the perceived importance of the brand image attributes of an MBA service provider, and the perceived ability of the brand to satisfy the needs of a potential MBA student, will result in improved customer-based brand equity.

These statements are supported by the evidence contained in the Markinor survey, and the example of a relatively new entrant to the South African market, namely Bond University is used to demonstrate the importance of brand image as follows:

- Bond University only entered the South African market in 1998, producing 46 graduates in 1998, 69 graduates in 1999 and 129 in 2000.
- The marketing communication and advertising strategy used by Bond focused on a payoff line that stated: “the MBA that beat Harvard”, and highlighted the success achieved by Bond students during a business game competition held in the USA.
- The marketing communication also highlighted the “international” status of the Bond MBA, by emphasising the fact of visiting lecturers from Bond University in Australia. The reality of the situation is the fact that the Bond lecturers only delivered part of the MBA programme (maximum 50%), with local South African lecturers (from competing institutions) and South African practitioners delivering the balance of the programme.

Bond University is an excellent example of the reactions of consumers to the brand value proposition and the perceived image of a brand. The perceived image of the brand has also allowed Bond to price their MBA programme as the fourth most expensive MBA in South Africa (Markinor, 2001).

A further example of the importance of brand image evidenced in the Markinor report is the ranking of the most admired schools among MBA graduates, which reflects UCT, Wits and Unisa in identical order to the previous year’s placing (Markinor, 2001). This is

despite the factual evidence of the increasing number of graduates from other local and foreign based MBA service providers.

Based on the research findings stated above, the null hypothesis that a favourable and positive brand image will not result in improved customer-based brand equity is therefore rejected.

4.6 Summary and Conclusions

- ❑ Chapter 4 presented an analysis of the research conducted by Markinor in their 2001 MBA survey. Their research revealed that the MBA market in South Africa has undergone dramatic changes during the past few years, which included an increased level of demand from ambitious prospective students, as well as the increased entrance of foreign MBA service providers which has increased the level of competitiveness in the marketplace.
- ❑ The perceived brand image of MBA service providers in South Africa, and the perceived ability of a brand to satisfy the needs of potential MBA students, are strong drivers of customer-based brand equity.
- ❑ A brand is said to have positive customer-based brand equity if consumers react more favourably to the marketing mix of the brand than they do to the same marketing mix element when it is attributed to another relatively unknown or new brand. This is clearly demonstrated in the Markinor Survey ranking of most admired business schools (Table 4-22).

- The actual nature of how consumers' responses differ will depend on the consumers' evaluations of various brand associations, and the marketing mix element under consideration.
- Chapter 5, which follows, will summarise and discuss the main results obtained from this study, the limitations of these results, and the connections between the results and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.
- Chapter 5 will also present further research recommendations and a proposed model that will attempt to narrow the gap between brand identity and brand image.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The focus of this study has been the importance and relevance of brand image as perceived by the consumer and its subsequent impact on customer-based brand equity as defined by Keller (1993). Brand image may also be described as a “passive” concept in that it is based mainly on the perceptions of the brand by the consumer. The evaluation of the Markinor 2001 survey which follows, and the conclusions drawn from the survey, will form the basis for the recommendation by the writer for the development of an Integrated Brand Management Model.

5.2 Evaluation of the Markinor 2001 Survey Research Results

The 23 business schools that participated in the Markinor 2001 Survey reflect a prominent focus on developing students who are solutions-oriented, who can think imaginatively and creatively in relation to business challenges, and are capable of acting as facilitators of change, and assume roles as leaders in the management process (Markinor, 2001).

While the abovementioned criteria indicate the most prominent focus of business schools, it should be noted that these schools will individually develop and focus on their own themes, which in turn may impact directly on the image of the brand. For example, the themes illustrated in Table 4-6 may impact directly on the perceptions of a prospective

MBA student in terms of the relevance of the business school's theme to that of the prospective student. For example, a student who is looking for an MBA that will hone his/her skills as a leader, may select an MBA service provider from PBS, Henley, UDW, USQ or RAU.

These "themes", may therefore impact directly on the perceived brand image to a greater or lesser degree, dependent upon factors such as strength of the communication message, as well as quality and clarity of the message, on the part of the MBA service provider. The business schools, philosophies, coupled with the numerous types of programmes offered, present prospective MBA students with a complex task in terms of evaluating and deciding upon a business school and a programme that will suit all their personal developmental requirements.

The South African market has become even more complicated owing to the increasing number of international business schools appearing on the business scene, coupled with a growing trend towards globalisation of business and academic environments. A further complication is the suggested level of price sensitivity by the Markinor Survey among potential MBA students. Markinor suggests that in this market, price is often a perceived differentiator, and is linked to quality, which may or may not be the case in reality.

The Markinor Survey reveals that in spite of an increase in the number of MBA service providers, prices rose by an average of 16% from 1999. This tends to indicate that prospective MBA students are still willing to pay for the prestige factor that is attached to

the acquisition of an MBA degree. The suggestion by Markinor that market price is often a perceived differentiator on the basis of quality, could form the basis for additional future research.

Another factor for consideration highlighted in the Markinor Survey, is the trend of “match” between certain types of graduates and the perceived brand image of specific business schools. This is demonstrated in the survey that engineers are most likely to graduate from UCT, Wits Business School, University of Stellenbosch and University of Pretoria. Scientists are most likely to graduate from Unisa or Stellenbosch, whereas graduates with prior experience in the social sciences are more likely to graduate from the University of Pretoria, RAU or De Montfort University. Once again, these factors are likely to influence the perceived brand image of these MBA service providers when prospective students from these academic backgrounds are considering an MBA service provider. Furthermore, this demonstrates the power of brand image as a driver of customer-based brand equity in this market.

Although more than half of the respondents in the survey (56%) received some form of sponsorship towards their MBA degree, and given that the MBA degree is recognised as a motivator of career change, an increasing number of entrepreneurs seem to be undertaking an MBA degree. Once again, this trend could impact directly on the success of specific business schools that project a perceived entrepreneurial brand image to a prospective MBA student.

One of the most significant aspects of the Markinor Survey is reflected in the comparison between the categories of motivational reasons for doing an MBA, and the post-assessment of achievement of these reasons. The use of correspondence analysis to explore whether respondents with specific reasons for doing an MBA could be linked to specific business schools is also significant, and demonstrates the importance of perceived brand image as a motivational driver on the part of a potential MBA student when selecting a business school.

A common reason for using correspondence analysis is to produce perceptual maps which, according to O'Brien (1993:54), are an essential element of product positioning, which, in turn, is the usual implementation of a strategy of product differentiation or market segmentation. According to Whitlark and Smith (2001), correspondence analysis is often used in positioning and image studies to explore the relationship between brands, between attributes, and between brands and attributes. In strategic terms, the marketing researcher wants to identify:

- ❑ Closely competitive brands.
- ❑ Important attributes.
- ❑ How attributes cluster together.
- ❑ A brand's competitive strength.
- ❑ Ideas for improving a brand's competitive position.

An evaluation of correspondence analysis also reveals certain limitations of this technique. Whitlark and Smith (2001), state that a mapping approach that offers a single

solution rather than a number of different solutions will impede strategic thinking on the part of a marketer. They argue that with brand positioning, the ideal is to view the market in at least two ways:

- Firstly, marketers require a map that highlights the strengths of the market leaders, and what the market leaders “own” in the specific market.
- Secondly, marketers require a map that clearly points out the unique strengths of their own brand.

Correspondence analysis will usually provide the first view, but according to Whitlark and Smith (2001), not the second, because it is driven by an automated process that does not consider the ultimate goal of a positioning study, i.e., formulating a successful marketing strategy. They state that there is a further drawback to displaying positioning data with a correspondence analysis map, whereby marketers usually concentrate their attention on a single map and often accept the existing competitive structure rather than thinking about making it into what they want it to be. The example cited is when marketers to start thinking of how to improve their brand’s performance on attributes already dominated by bigger companies.

Whitlark and Smith (2001) suggest that a better strategic alternative is for marketers to develop marketing programmes that increase the importance of attributes on which they perform best. This suggestion will assist marketers in determining which brand attribute they in fact should be concentrating on, and prevent them from focusing on brand

attributes that are “owned” by the market leaders, or where consumers do not consider the attribute to be of significance.

Markinor selected 11 brand attribute criteria for their 2001 survey, and their selection was based on the fact that no significant criteria emerged in the pilot survey (Markinor, 2001). In order to evaluate the significance and relevance of the brand attributes used in the Markinor survey, the writer compared the Human Sciences Research Council Private Higher Education Project’s (HSRC, 2001) brand attribute criteria, with those used in the Markinor survey. The Human Sciences Research Council’s Project is an analysis of private higher education institutions in South Africa, and part of the project document analysed brand attribute selection criteria used by MBA students. Students were asked the following question as part of the study:

- To what extent has each of the following (brand attributes), influenced you to study at a private (MBA service provider) institution?

Respondents in the Human Sciences Research Council Survey were asked to rate a total of 16 brand attributes, which included all the attributes included in the Markinor survey, with the exception of quality of graduates. The writer was therefore satisfied that the Markinor survey had included sufficient brand attributes to ensure relevance of the survey.

The evaluation of the correspondence analysis reflected in Table 4-18 indicates a significantly higher or lower level of association of brand attributes for certain business schools than the average number of the total sample. This provides an indication that

students who selected certain business schools were strongly motivated by certain brand attribute criteria such as affordability, unlike for other business schools. This also implies that certain business schools are likely to attract students who are motivated by these perceived brand attribute criteria.

The post-graduate evaluation of the business schools from which students had graduated, provided a form of confirmation feedback comparison with the original reasons for selecting a specific business school. The final section of the Markinor survey required students to rank the business school they most admired. Markinor states that the potential for sample bias is high, and therefore graduates' ratings of their own schools were excluded from the rating of that school by the total sample.

The fact that Markinor excluded graduates' ratings of their own business schools to overcome any potential bias, does not necessarily mean that a certain bias does not exist in the results obtained. The writer is of the opinion that bias can present itself based on the following:

- 1. Brand Salience:**

Brand salience refers to the order in which brands come to mind. It does not refer to what consumers *think* about brands, but to which ones they *think about*. In market research, brand salience is frequently measured by top-of-mind awareness and total unaided brand awareness (Miller, 1998:83).

The writer believes, based on the concept of brand salience, that a strong potential for bias exists for graduates to rate other MBA brands that have a high level of brand

salience, ahead of other smaller brands that have a lower level of brand salience. This means that a graduate from UCT, is likely to rate Wits, Stellenbosch, Unisa, or one of the other business schools that have a higher level of brand salience, ahead of Heriot- Watt, for example, even though Heriot-Watt rated a significantly higher level of association than did UCT, Wits, Unisa and Stellenbosch in terms of quality and standard of curriculum.

The effect is therefore compounded for smaller business schools, which are unlikely to ever gain access to the top ten ranking unless they improve their level of brand salience significantly. This is despite the fact that an MBA service provider ranked at the number 11 position, may well be outperforming some of the other MBA service providers that are ranked far higher.

A final comment concerns the level of knowledge that MBA graduates are likely to possess of the top ten business schools, in order for them to make an objective judgement and ranking. Although not proved, it is the writer's contention, that the majority of graduates are likely to possess a limited amount of information on all the business schools ranked in the top ten, and concomitantly all the business schools participating in the survey.

2. Double Jeopardy

Double jeopardy is a well-documented relationship between brand size and other performance measures and implies that the more users a brand has, the better it tends to perform in terms of all brand performance measures. So a brand gains "doubly" when it

gains new users – not only will more people be buying it, but all those who buy it tend to do so with more loyalty (Rice and Hofmeyer, 2000:104).

The problem with double jeopardy according to Rice and Hofmeyer (2000:105), is that, real as it is, double jeopardy only applies to steady-state markets – markets in which brand market shares are relatively stable.

The comparison between the 1999 business school ranking, and the 2000 ranking, reveals that UCT, Wits and Unisa took the top three rankings in both studies. Furthermore, the only change to the top ten ranking is Dimension Data, which replaced the University of Wales. This would tend to indicate that the market could be defined as a “steady-state” market, as defined by Rice and Hofmeyer (2000:105), and therefore double jeopardy will apply.

The phenomenon of double jeopardy could, therefore, have a significant impact upon the graduates’ perceptions of other business schools, as there is a strong likelihood that the “stronger”, more established MBA brands will come to mind, based on their perceived brand image, before the smaller brands, even though these brands may well possess positive, real comparable attributes.

5.3 Summary and Discussion of the Main Findings of this Study

It is the writer's opinion, based on the results obtained from this study, that the perceived brand image of an MBA service provider is a strong motivating factor when a prospective student is selecting an MBA service provider.

This study was formulated and reviewed from the perspective of Keller's Dimensions of Brand Knowledge Model (1993), which was used to demonstrate the visual, psychological and behavioural complexity that surrounds the study of brand image. The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 highlighted the complexity involved in understanding the meaning and relevance of a brand from the perspective of a consumer. This complexity is demonstrated by Kotler (2000), who suggests that a brand can convey up to six levels of meaning, which include the perceived attributes, benefits, values, culture, personality and type of user who buys or uses the product. These levels of meaning are tangibly demonstrated in the Markinor research results, which indicate that potential MBA students are strongly influenced by the perceived brand attribute associations and perceived brand attribute benefits of certain business schools. Furthermore, brand image attributes relating to values, culture of the MBA service provider, personality and type of user of specific MBA service providers were also clearly demonstrated in the Markinor research findings.

One of the limitations of Keller's model, in the writer's opinion, and based on research findings of specialist brand researchers such as Rice and Hofmeyer, (2000), is that brand

image as represented in the model, is depicted as a linear relationship, but should rather be viewed and presented from a holistic perspective. The research conducted by Sen (1999) confirms that when consumers judge a set of brands, they process information holistically or by brand, generating global evaluations for each brand. As stated in Chapter 1, a deeper understanding of the power and influence of consumer perception of brands is necessary for marketers to be able to identify the key attributes of brand image likely to impact changes in consumer behaviour, that in turn lead to changes in brand equity.

A further limitation of the model, is the non-existence of the brand identity element, which Aaker defines as “a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain, which represent what the brand stands for, and imply a promise to customers from the organisation members” (Aaker, 1996:68). Keller’s model therefore views brand knowledge from the perspective of the consumer, and addresses brand image from what the writer describes as a “passive” perspective. This means that brand image is a result of the interpretations by consumers of the perceived brand attribute associations. Brand identity is described from an “active” perspective, and is vested in the brand strategist, and is a prerequisite for establishing a relationship between the brand and the consumer, by generating a value proposition to consumers, involving the tangible functional, emotional, and self-expressive benefits of the brand.

The importance of brand identity and its dimensions is highlighted by Aaker (1996:79), whereby he proposes that brand identity consists of twelve dimensions organised around

the four perspectives of brand-as-product, brand-as-organisation, brand-as-person and brand-as-symbol. The importance and relevance of Aaker's proposed brand identity dimensions are adequately reflected and demonstrated in the Markinor survey research findings, which indicate that certain MBA students will select an MBA service provider based on the perceived image of the service provider's brand identity.

The above implies that brand identity and brand image are interrelated, and therefore that brands are viewed from a holistic perspective by consumers. This implies further that any brand model should include both the dimensions of brand identity and brand image, and that the measurement of any gap that may exist between the brand identity developed by the brand strategist, and the perceived image of the brand from the perspective of the consumer, is of critical importance to the brand strategist.

A further consideration with regard to Keller's model is the presumption of brand knowledge, which implies that brand knowledge already exists, although the level of brand awareness may be low. However, it is the writer's contention, which is validated in the literature review, that brand awareness, which includes brand recall and brand recognition, precedes brand knowledge. Brand knowledge is therefore the result of both brand awareness, and brand image perceptions, as well as direct associations and interactions with the brand itself.

The importance of brand awareness is confirmed by Sen (1999) in Chapter 2 (literature review), who states that consumer awareness of a brand name is the critical first step in

the development of brand knowledge. The research of Rossiter and Percy (1987) also confirms that brand awareness is essential for the communications process to occur as it precedes all other steps in the process, and that without brand awareness occurring, no other communication effects can take place.

The alternative approach by Timmerman (1999) to the associative network memory model which forms the basis of Keller's model, presents a further interesting viewpoint. Timmerman's viewpoint is that the drawback of the associative network memory view of memory is that it yields a static picture, and that such a static conceptualisation of memory cannot fully explain the flexibility of memory. Timmerman's contention, based on Barsalou's frame theory, that attributes and values are obtained from all forms of experience, implies that all memory elements are directly derived from experience, or are experience transformations.

The benefit of Timmerman's research can be found in the perceptual element related to brand image formation as a result of the creation of perceptual symbols in memory, which are then organised into frame structures using attribute-value sets. However, the key element to the benefits that can be derived from the use of these attribute-value sets described by Timmerman, vests in how the brand strategist will determine these attribute-value sets.

A final consideration with regard to Keller's model concerns the lack of a direct link between brand knowledge (comprising brand awareness and brand image), and its impact

on customer-based brand equity, as conceptualised by Keller. This suggests that further research opportunities exist regarding how to build customer-based brand equity.

5.4 Alternative Approach Considerations

According to Rice and Hofmeyer (2000:2), the key to successful marketing is knowing what is in the consumer's mind and managing the relationship properly. This is what they have called *commitment-led marketing*, and, according to their research, relates to the fact that customer satisfaction is a poor predictor of behaviour, but that commitment is an excellent predictor. Commitment-led marketing is about understanding consumers in terms of the commitment they have towards the organisation's brand, and then using that information to decide how best to manage that relationship (Rice and Hofmeyer 2000:3).

They describe commitment as a state of mind, which may be described as the happiness of the marriage between the consumer and the brand (Rice and Hofmeyer 2000:3). A further important aspect which they highlight is the confusion created by marketers in distinguishing between the concepts of loyalty and commitment. Loyalty, according to Rice and Hofmeyer (2000:3), is about what consumers do, while commitment is about what consumers feel.

The relevance of the Rice and Hofmeyer (2000:21), commitment-led marketing concept, and its relationship to this study is important from the perspective that commitment is psychological rather than behavioural, and is about what is in the mind of the consumer,

rather than about what he/she does. When a consumer has no strong preference for any brand, then he/she will tend to buy the brand with the greatest presence in the local market. This is particularly relevant in terms of a prospective MBA student who does not have any strong preference for any particular brand, and is therefore likely to consider MBA brands with the most presence in the market

Brand equity is conceptualised by Rice and Hofmeyer (2001:101), as comprising three components, namely:

- Customer equity: what is in the mind of consumers, the consumers' relationship with each brand – everything the consumer associates with, thinks or feels about each brand.
- Market equity: the relative market power of the brand, including each brand's market presence in terms of distribution, size of sales force, share of voice, and relative price.
- Factory equity: the cost to the organisation of getting the brand to the market.

Brand equity in turn will define financial equity, which is defined as the actual currency value of a brand measured as the net present value of the brands' long-term contribution to profits (Rice and Hofmeyer, 2000:101).

The concept of commitment-led marketing and its integrated approach to brand equity is an important consideration and extension to Keller's Dimension of Brand Knowledge Model from the perspective of customer-based brand equity.

Brand identity is an important concept for the brand strategist, and must be fully integrated into the brand management process. A weak brand identity will lead to a negative or poorly perceived brand image by the consumer.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

- Concerns regarding the potential for bias in the final “ranking of most admired business schools” by MBA graduates have been commented upon and documented by the writer.
- The majority of brand image and brand equity measurement studies are conducted for existing brands, and there is much scope for research to be conducted that will assist marketers with the development of brand identity marketing strategies and tactics for new brands.

5.6 Future Research

Keller (1993) suggests some research priorities for building, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity which include amongst others the establishment of better choice criteria for brand identities such as brand name considerations, brand logo or brand symbol. It is the writer’s contention that there is an opportunity to investigate and research the “brand gap” that exists between brand identity (as developed by the organisation), and brand image (as perceived by the consumer), and the impact that brand identity and brand image have on brand equity when viewed from a holistic perspective.

The development and management of brand identity is crucial to the success of an MBA service provider, as brand identity should precede brand image and not merely be left to the perceptions of the brand by potential MBA students.

5.7 Proposed Integrated Brand Management Model

One of the outcomes of this study as stated in Chapter 1, is the development of a model that will serve as a theoretical framework and assist brand marketers in evaluating the nature and impact of brand image on customer-based brand equity. This study has revealed further that the management of brands is extremely complex, and that the need exists to approach the development and management of brands and branding from a more holistic perspective.

A further complication which became apparent to the writer during this study, relates to the seeming lack of practical information available to marketers, particularly new entrepreneurs, regarding a process that can be followed when launching a new brand. It is for these reasons that the writer proposes an Integrated Brand Management Model.

5.7.1 Objectives of the Integrated Brand Management Model

The objectives of creating an Integrated Brand Management Model are:

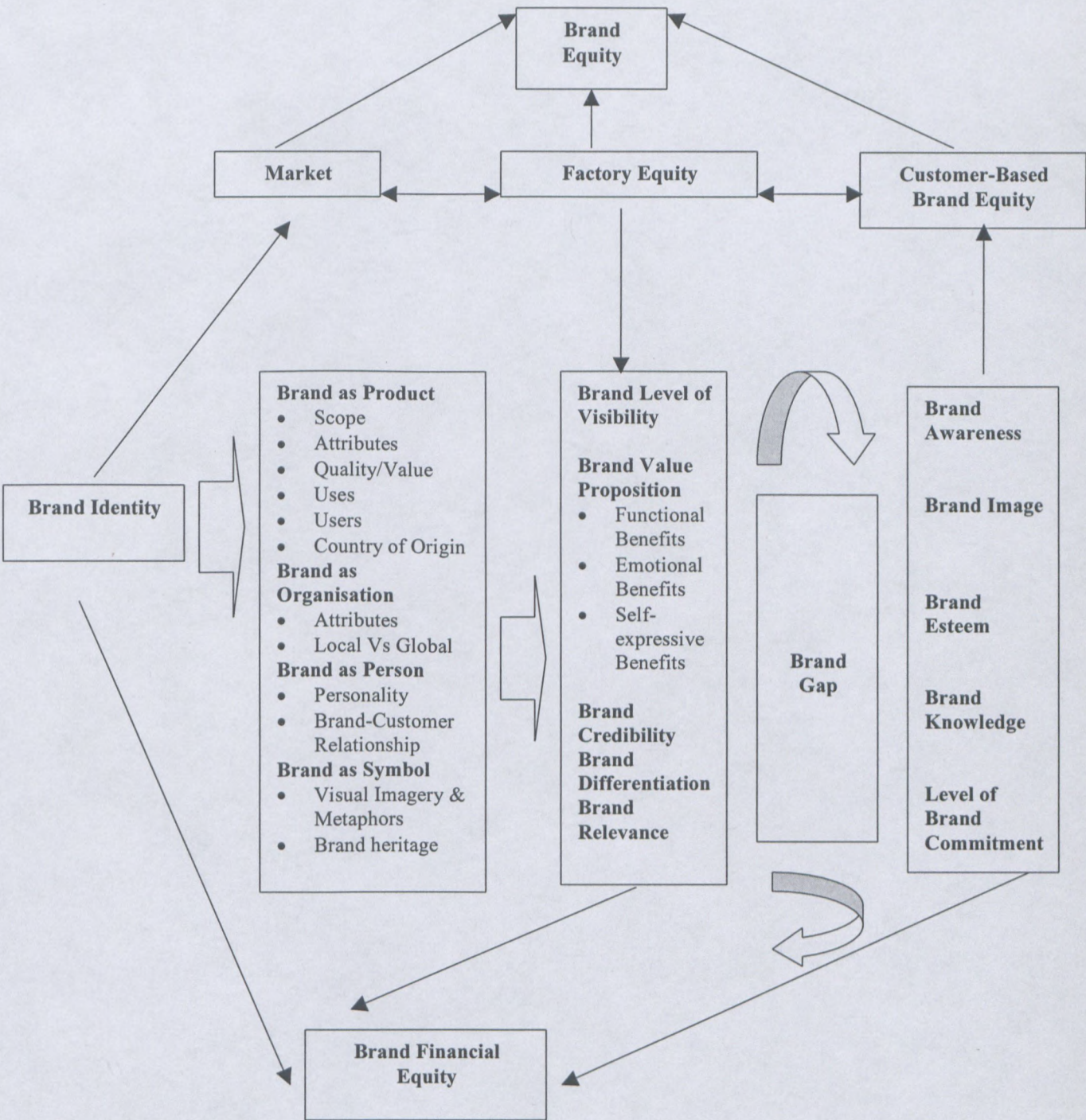
- To present a visual brand management planning tool for brand managers and brand strategists.
- To highlight the necessity for an integrated and holistic approach to brand management, by visually demonstrating the impact that positive (and negative)

perceptions of a brand, and the subsequent level of commitment by consumers, can have on brand equity.

- To integrate the concepts of brand identity, brand image and brand equity, by suggesting that the process of branding should be approached and managed from a circular, and not linear perspective.

5.8 Formulation of the Integrated Brand Management Model

Figure 5-1 Integrated Brand Management Model



The Integrated Brand Management Model is formulated and based on several models and key factors necessary for successful brand management. The result is a hybrid model that integrates the previous work of several brand specialists and academics, and which emphasises the importance of their contribution to the study of brand management.

The emphasis and focus of the Integrated Brand Management Model is on the launch of a new brand, although the integrated process is equally applicable to an existing brand.

The model has been formulated as follows:

- The establishment of the market segmentation dimensions and target market requirements for the product category.
- Establishment of the brand identity. Here the writer has drawn from the brand identity system as postulated by Aaker (1996), who suggests that brand identity consists of twelve dimensions organised around four perspectives: brand-as-product, brand-as-organisation, brand-as-person, and brand-as-symbol. Brand identity is a unique set of associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain, and these associations represent what the brand stands for (Aaker, 1996:68).
- The brand value proposition is presented to the specific target market, and includes the functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits as suggested by Aaker (1996:95). At this stage it is suggested that the model include the additional dimensions of level of visibility of the brand, brand credibility, and two critical additional dimensions of differentiation and relevance. Here the writer has drawn from the ongoing research conducted by Young & Rubicam Inc.'s, proprietary research tool, BrandAsset Valuator (Redhill, 1999:76).

This is one of the most comprehensive branding surveys ever conducted, and contains information about more than 13000 brands, drawn from interviews with 90000 consumers in 30 countries. The survey provides an instructive roadmap of territories through which a brand must pass before it can become a true “leadership brand” (Redhill, 1999:76).

- The model next reflects the consumers’ interpretation of the identity of the brand, and the dimensions that collectively represent the brand value proposition, visibility, differentiation and relevance.
- Crucial to the success of the brand, is firstly the awareness of the brand by the consumer. Once brand awareness has been established, consumer brand attribute/associations will develop based on the types, favourability, strength and uniqueness of these associations.
- Based on these associations and consumer experiences with the brand, and the brand’s ability to deliver on its promises of quality, value and satisfaction, the brand’s esteem will increase or decrease.
- Brand awareness and brand image will impact upon brand knowledge, and all of these factors will ultimately result in a strong or weak level of commitment towards the brand. The research of Rice and Hofmeyer (2000) is considered by the writer to be the crucial to the model, as commitment and not loyalty will determine the long-term success of a brand.

- The consumer will also be influenced by the market equity and factory equity of the brand, which will in turn affect his/her own level of brand equity, and is a direct result of the factors mentioned above.
- Finally, the level of market equity, factory equity and customer equity will impact directly on brand equity and ultimately the financial equity of the brand.
- The “brand gap” that is reflected in the model, reflects the difference between the brand identity as determined by the brand strategist, and the brand image as perceived by the consumer. The greater the gap, the greater the impact upon customer-based brand equity, brand equity and financial equity, owing to the reduced level of commitment towards the consumer using the brand.
- Measurement of the “brand gap” for each of the key motivating factors identified in the model, using appropriate brand management research tools, must be conducted by the brand strategist on an ongoing basis.

5.9 Conclusions

This research focused on a high-involvement purchase, namely the search, consideration and selection of an MBA service provider, and the level of importance attached to the brand image of these MBA service providers by prospective MBA students. The writer has concluded that while brand image does impact directly on customer-based brand equity, brand identity is the forerunner to brand image and must be included in the brand management process.

The Integrated Brand Management Model presents a visual framework for brand strategists to use and reflect upon the importance of a holistic approach to brand management. The model invites additional refinement and research that will improve consumer relationships, by narrowing the gap and understanding between branded products and the consumers of these products.

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Annexure A

Markinor 2001 MBA Study: MBA-Graduate Questionnaire (Abridged Questionnaire)

Introduction Question No. 1.

Good(as appropriate) my name is From Markinor, a leading market research company. We have been commissioned by the Financial Mail to conduct a survey on MBA/MBL graduates and we would like your opinion on this issue. This interview will take about 20 minutes.

Is it convenient to continue now or may I make an appointment to contact you later?

- ☐ Yes, continue.
- ☐ No, new appointment, refused etc.

Question No. 2

Please tell me the name of the business school from which you graduated.

- ☐ BSN – Business School Netherlands
- ☐ Bond – Bond University
- ☐ Cape Technikon – MBA Curtin University W Australia
- ☐ De Montfort South Africa
- ☐ Dimension Data – MBA through Manchester Business School and University of Wales (UK)
- ☐ Henley – Henley Management College – Centre for Advanced Management Development (Camdev)
- ☐ Hull University
- ☐ MANCOSA (Management College of Southern Africa)
- ☐ Milpark Business School – Midrand University,s – Thames Valley University (TVU)
- ☐ Newport University
- ☐ Damelin – Oxford Brookes University – Damelin Open Learning
- ☐ PBS – Potchefstroom Business School – MBA
- ☐ RAU – Rand Afrikaans University – MCom Business Management
- ☐ Technikon SA – Integrated Btech and Mtech BA
- ☐ Unisa – Graduate School of Business Leadership – MBL
- ☐ UCT – University of Cape Town – Graduate School of Business – MBA
- ☐ University of Durban-Westville – Graduate School of Business
- ☐ UP – University of Pretoria – Graduate School of Management
- ☐ USQ – University of South Queensland (USQ) – MBA
- ☐ University of Stellenbosch – Graduate School of Business
- ☐ University of Wales – run by six technikons (Natal, Witwatersrand, Vaal Triangle, Port Elizabeth, Pretoria, Free State) – MBA
- ☐ WBS – Wits Business School

Question No. 3

Could you please tell me the year in which you graduated from your MBA/MBL course.

- ☐ 1998
- ☐ 1999
- ☐ 2000
- ☐ Other year (WILL CLOSE).

Question No. 4

Did you receive any form of sponsorship (excluding bank loans) for your MBA studies?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Question No. 5

What type of sponsorship did you receive?

- ☐ Corporate sponsorship
- ☐ Paid study leave
- ☐ Business school bursary
- ☐ Other (Specify)

Question No. 6

How many years managerial experience did you have prior to starting your MBA?

- ☐ UP to one year
- ☐ Between one and two years
- ☐ Between two and five years
- ☐ Between five and eight years
- ☐ More than eight years
- ☐ None

Question No. 7

I am going to read out to you a list of reasons that other graduates have given for doing an MBA. Please can you rank the following reasons from 1 to 7, where one is the **MOST** important reason, and seven is the **LEAST** important reason.

Attributes:

1. Financial reward
2. Status
3. Business skills enhancement
4. Personal skills enhancement
5. Networking
6. Facilitate job promotion
7. Career planning, i.e., facilitate job change

Question No. 8

Is there any other reason not mentioned previously that you considered important in terms of your decision to do an MBA?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Question No. 9

Could you tell me the extent to which you achieved that aim?

Please use a scale where:

1= Not achieved at all, 2=Partially achieved and 3=fully achieved

- ☐ Fully achieved
- ☐ Partially achieved
- ☐ Not achieved at all
- ☐ Don't know

Question No. 10

Now I'd like to talk about all the business schools. Please mention all the South African or international business schools operating in this country that you are aware of or that you contacted as part of your decision to pursue an MBA.

Do not read out – multiple mentions possible.

- ☐ BSN
- ☐ Bond
- ☐ Cape Technikon
- ☐ De Montfort
- ☐ Dimension Data
- ☐ Henley
- ☐ Heriot Watt University
- ☐ Hull University
- ☐ MANCOSA
- ☐ Milpark Business School
- ☐ Newport University
- ☐ Damelin – Oxford Brookes
- ☐ PBS – Potchefstroom Business School
- ☐ RAU – Rand Afrikaans University
- ☐ Technikon SA
- ☐ Unisa
- ☐ UCT
- ☐ University of Durban-Westville
- ☐ UP-University of Pretoria
- ☐ USQ – University of Southern Queensland
- ☐ USB – University of Stellenbosch Graduate School of Business
- ☐ University of Wales
- ☐ WBS – Wits Business School

Question No. 11

Please would you tell me your overall impression of the business school that you attended by rating it on the following scale where 1 is poor, 2 is fair, 3 is good, 4 is very good and 5 is excellent, and you may use any number in between.

1. Poor
2. Fair
3. Good
4. Very good
5. Excellent
6. Don't know

Question No. 12

Have you heard of (read out name of business schools not mentioned)?

- ☐ BSN
- ☐ Bond
- ☐ Cape Technikon
- ☐ De Montfort
- ☐ Dimension Data
- ☐ Henley
- ☐ Heriott Watt
- ☐ Hull University
- ☐ MANCOSA
- ☐ Milpark Business School
- ☐ Newport University
- ☐ Damelin – Oxford Brookes
- ☐ PBS-Potchefstroom University
- ☐ RAU – Rand University
- ☐ Technikon SA
- ☐ Unisa
- ☐ UCT
- ☐ University of Durban-Westville
- ☐ UP – University of Pretoria
- ☐ USQ – University of South Queensland
- ☐ USB – University of Stellenbosch Graduate School of Business
- ☐ University of Wales
- ☐ WBS – Wits Business School
- ☐ NONE

Question No. 13

Please would you tell me your overall impression of the schools that you mentioned that you are aware of but did not select by rating them on the following scale where 1 is poor, 2 is fair, 3 is good, 4 is very good and 5 is excellent and you may use any number in between.

1. Poor
2. Fair
3. Good
4. Very good
5. Excellent
6. DON'T KNOW

Question No. 14

I would like to find out a bit more information about the business schools that you have mentioned. Which South African or international business school or international school operating in South Africa do you personally admire the most?

DO NOT READ OUT.

- ☐ BSN – Business School Netherlands
- ☐ Bond University
- ☐ Cape Technikon
- ☐ De Montfort
- ☐ Dimension Data
- ☐ Henley Management College

- ☐ Heriot Watt University
- ☐ Hull University
- ☐ MANCOSA
- ☐ Milparl Business School
- ☐ Newport University
- ☐ Damelin – Oxford Brookes University
- ☐ PBS – Potchefstroom Business School
- ☐ RAU – Rand Afrikaans University
- ☐ Technikon SA
- ☐ Unisa
- ☐ UCT
- ☐ University of Durban-Westville
- ☐ UP – University of Pretoria
- ☐ USQ – University of South Queensland
- ☐ USB – University of Stellenbosch Graduate School of Business
- ☐ University of Wales
- ☐ WBS – Wits Business School

Question No. 15

I'm interested that you did not attend your most admired school. Are there any particular reasons why you did not attend?

Multiple Mentions Possible.

- ☐ Cost considerations
- ☐ Application rejected
- ☐ Curriculum inflexibility
- ☐ Geographical distance
- ☐ Employer imposed choice
- ☐ I changed my opinion while completing my course
- ☐ Study mode inflexibility
- ☐ Other (Specify)

Question No. 16

We're now going to explore the reasons as to why you chose your business school.

I'm going to read out a number of brand attributes. Please can you tell me how important each brand attribute is to you, using a five point scale, where 5 is extremely important, 4 means very important, 3 means somewhat important, 2 not very important, and 1 means not at all important.

Brand Attributes:

- ☐ Quality and standard of curriculum
- ☐ Quality of lecturers
- ☐ Quality of facilities
- ☐ Quality of graduates
- ☐ Courses affordability/value for money
- ☐ Location convenience
- ☐ School reputation/status in business community
- ☐ Easy entry requirements/acceptance
- ☐ Difficult entry requirements/acceptance
- ☐ Mode of course offered (Part-time, Full-time or Distance)
- ☐ Course content

Question No. 17

Now that you have completed your MBA degree, please rate your business school on the following brand attributes using a 5 point scale where 1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=very good, 5=excellent.

Brand Attributes:

- ☐ Quality and standard of curriculum
- ☐ Quality of lecturers
- ☐ Quality of facilities
- ☐ Quality of graduates
- ☐ Course affordability/value for money
- ☐ School reputation/status in business community
- ☐ The level of cutting edge research activity
- ☐ Degree of global focus
- ☐ Degree of South African focus
- ☐ Enjoyment of course
- ☐ Course content
- ☐ The supervisory support that you received during the research process

Question No. 18

What are the most important changes that you would like to see to your MBA programme?

NOTE: Do not record more than three of the most important points.

Question No. 19

We will also be surveying a selection of companies who have recruited MBA graduates.

These companies will be asked to discuss their experiences with dealing with the various business schools and their graduates. We will not be asking them to comment on individuals, and no personal information will be disclosed to them. As our intention is to make sure that all schools are represented in our employer sample, may we approach your employer for comment?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

